

PASSAGES

FROM

THE HISTORY OF A WASTED LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

YES—by that appellation, and by that alone, shall the author of the following chapters from *REAL LIFE* be known. Why should I attach my name to these confessions, for such they will prove to be? It is enough for the reader to be assured that they will be veritable chronicles. "Truth," said Byron, "is stranger than fiction." He was right. Some one else has declared with equal force, that any person who should write a faithful history of his own career could not fail to produce an interesting volume. What need, I would ask, have we of "thrilling tales of romance," as the cant of the day has it, when the materials for "startling developments" abundantly exist in our memories? But dare we be candid? How few have the resolution to chronicle their faults and failings. And how many shrink from making a public display of their miserable experiences, after a deliverance from danger, owing to a fear of being accused of glorying in their past shame and of exhibiting "the pride that apes humility." I confess I am no great admirer of platform confessions—but herein I differ from many good men who deem it advisable to minutely describe the horrors of the pit from whence they were digged. Into this question, however, I will not enter, but address myself at once to my subject.

To comprehend this chapter, however, and those which succeed it, it will be necessary for me to briefly refer to my past position. What my present standing is, concerns no one. It may so happen that certain incidents will suggest my identity to some reader; for I shall write truthfully, and so cannot well fail now and then to drop a clue which may be discerned by an observing eye. No matter; such a contingency would but verify my story. Of my birth, my parentage, education, and such like, I need not speak minutely. At the proper age, I was articled to a member of one of the learned professions, a fact which is of itself sufficient to show that my father occupied no mean position; for in the "land where I was born" the gates to the practising Courts of Law, Physic, and Divinity, are only to be opened with a golden key.

Without vanity I may say that the years of student life having past, I entered on the great race of life as well qualified, mentally and socially, as most young men. For a time all was well;—but why blink the truth?—I DRANK! at first in my family—then in the jovial circle—lastly everywhere; but not with *every*-body, for I was not quite without pride. The result may be guessed at. Embarrassment and then ruin came—retrievless ruin as I thought then, and so to drown my care I drank the deeper. "*Facilis descensus averni*," says the ancient poet, and so I found it to be. At length, forbearance having had its limits, friends looked cold; and, too proud to seek for aid from those whom I had known in "better days"—I made a desperate effort—scraped a few pounds together, and having obtained a passage as surgeon in an emigrant ship, found myself one fine morning in New York, with but a few dollars in my pocket; and among the thousands who hurried by me not a single familiar face.

Will it be wondered at that in my vague desolation, I again sought refuge in intoxication? but rapidly became worse, until at last hope well nigh forsook me. God and the angels only know what I suffered

in that city—some future time I may record my experiences there. Time flew on, and when at length all seemed hopeless, a ray of light beamed upon my soul's darkness. By a mighty effort I signed the pledge, and ere long a brilliant career opened before me. But this was not to last. With excellent prospects I revisited my home, became once more domesticated, and spent twelve months of unalloyed happiness. So rapidly did I recover lost ground, that three months after reaching England, my company was sought by some of the brightest and best of London society. The ball of success was at my foot, and I might have kept it rolling until now—but one fatal day as I was passing through the Strand, I first feebly refused and then fatally accepted a glass of wine. That evening, to the horror of my friends, I returned to my home—drunk. Then commenced the new plunge towards perdition. Then friends turned away—then recklessness re-commenced. For five years my life was one long misery. If the stones of London streets could speak, what tales of my woes might they not reveal? Some of the incidents of this period of my life I am about to relate, not for the purpose of exciting a maudlin sympathy, but in order to warn others from the shoals on which I struck. Would that I possessed the powerful pen of De Quincy, who has so graphically chronicled his miseries in stony-hearted London! I pretend not to such talent, but if a true tale of self-inflicted sufferings may interest, and at the same time alarm, I can promise matter enough. Thank God I have been again rescued from impending ruin, and deeming that sketches of some scenes in a not unchequered life, may serve to show the horrors of drink—if indeed such were needed, I have determined to pen these chapters. They will not be consecutive, but as my recollections of certain scenes, I shall, heedless of system, order, or style, set them down.

A Fresh Start in Life.

THE preceding introductory remarks will have prepared the reader for records of destitution and disgrace. Such a one I am now about to narrate. Again let me solemnly assure the reader, that no embellishment whatever has been used by me; none such was needed; my sketches are literally "from the life."

I had been "knocking about London," as the phrase is, for months, living from hand to mouth generally, but now and then "in luck;" that is, by chance employment earning a few pounds which were speedily expended in taverns and theatres—when in the autumn of 184—, I strolled forth from my shilling-a-night lodging at a Coffee House in Covent Garden, breakfastless, hungry, and miserable.

How miserable, may be imagined from the fact that on the previous evening I had been carried to bed by some of my boon companions; but the whole extent of such horror as I then experienced can only be adequately pictured by one acquainted with the intricacies of London life. It is calculated that in that great city seventy thousand persons rise every morning without the means to procure a first meal;

and on the occasion to which I refer, I was one of that unhappy number. Not that I was hungry—far from it. Had all the dainties of Apicius been heaped before me, I should, with revolting stomach, have turned from them all. Strong drinks with me invariably destroy appetite, except the raging for what, with a horribly vulgar taste, has been styled “a hair of the dog that bit you;” in plain English—for more liquor. There I stood shivering in the raw air of an autumn morning, with bloodshot eyes—quivering nerves—parched tongue and penniless pockets—despising myself and hating my fellows—in fact, on the verge of *delirium tremens*!

Well enough did I know the reason of that sickening sensation—that feeling of utter prostration which I experienced:—that weakness of the knees, and the faintness which came over me as I leaned against the window of a book shop in Holywell-st., after, with difficulty, I had reeled a few steps; for I had not during four years “walked” the wards of a great London Hospital for nothing. I fancied every one looked at me as they passed by—I appeared the sole attraction; and though I *knew* it was not so, I could not divest myself of the notion. Now and then a policeman’s experienced eye would flash on me—he knew well enough what was the matter, but as I was not disorderly, he took no further notice. By slow degrees—after many pauses, to stay the beatings of my heart—I at last reached a tavern, and glad to escape observation, I hurried through the bar-room and buried myself in the gloom of the dim parlour beyond.

It was a low ill-lighted apartment, the floor and tables of which afforded evidences of the previous night’s potations; and the whole place had a foul smell of stale drinks and tobacco smoke. Sticky rings of evaporated porter on the benches showed where pots of that beverage had rested; and battered vessels of pewter on the floor gave indications of a brawl.—There had been a time, and that but a few months before, when I would almost as soon have entered Tophet as such a den as that; but now I hailed it as a harbour and a refuge.

It is one of the penalties of a debauch over-night, that its victim is tormented next morning with a craving for drink of some kind; and indeed such in some cases is absolutely necessary—for the physical energy is so depressed that unless a fillip to the nervous system in the shape of a stimulant is given, serious consequences may ensue. I now felt this craving for an adjustment of the balance which last night’s excess had disturbed;—but how to procure a single drop was the question. As I have said, I had no money, and I knew well enough that the landlord would not trust.

There was one occupant of the parlour beside myself—a man all filthy and ragged, who sat luxuriating over a red herring and a pint of beer. How I envied him every draught as he lifted the pewter to a mouth all bristling with a week’s beard! My staring at him, I suppose, attracted his attention to me, for when he had finished his fish, and by one long draught had consumed the beverage, he looked full in my face.

“Shaky this morning, Mister?” said he, interrogatively.

I nodded.

“Take a pull at the pewter,” suggested the man;—“that’ll set a fellow to rights, I know, for I’ve tried it often enough when my coppers was hot.”

“Well,” said I with a mock gaiety, “I’d cool *mine* fast enough, but I came out without money, and I must wait till I go home before I get a drain.”

“Umph!” growled the stranger, and he quitted the room.

Before three minutes elapsed he returned with a foaming tankard of porter, which he set before me, and then took his seat opposite, on the other side of the fire.

“Drink, and don’t be afraid on it—I knows wot ’tis well enough to *want* it after a ‘fly’—you’re welkin, mate.”

Mate! the word jarred. What! had I fallen so low as to be addressed as an equal by a street grinder of knives? Yes, it was even so; but there was no help for it, so I swallowed the familiarity and half the malt liquor at the same time; the drink reconciling me to degradation, as indeed drink always will.

There was something picturesque in my companion; his very shabbiness was “effective,” as he sat

whiffing his short black pipe before the blazing fire, his grinding wheel standing near him. Now I had been always fond of sketching oddities “from the life,” and happening to have pencil and paper in my pocket, I asked the man if, to pass away time, I should draw his likeness? He was so pleased at the idea of having his “pictur” to send to his “old woman” who lived somewhere down in Lancashire, that he at once consented; and in the height of his gratitude sent for another supply of porter. Then he got his wheel into order, and stood by it as if in the act of grinding an imaginary razor; because, as he observed, “she wouldn’t believe it was he, if he wasn’t working the treddles.”

The drink had steadied my hand, and being naturally of elastic spirits, I soon got into working order. By a few bold, free touches, I succeeded in making (an easy matter with so marked a subject) a tolerably successful sketch.

He looked at it with great admiration, placed it before him in all sorts of positions, and greatly praised the grinding machine, which was evidently in his opinion a masterpiece of art. Then he took it out into the bar, and with an air of mystery showed it to the landlord, and asked him if he “knew any chap like as that?”

“Well, if that aint a stunner, old feller,” remarked the burly innkeeper, as he held the sketch at arm’s length. “I say, missis, come and look at Bill’s picture.”

The landlady emerged from the bar parlour, and was delighted; then came the waiters, then the maid servant, then some customers who dropped in; and I am vain enough to state that I felt not a little proud of their praises as I sat behind a little broken window pane, through which I quietly surveyed the scene.

“Who drew it?” asked the landlord.

The knife-grinder pointed to the room where I sat, and replied, “A chap in there—he’s some swell out of luck, I fancy,” he added in a low tone.

Presently the landlord came into the parlour accompanied by old Bill. He looked hard at me, and then enquired, pointing to the sketch—

“This your trade, Mister?”

“Not exactly, I only do it for amusement.” I felt ashamed to be thought a pot-house artist.

“Well,” he went on, “if you could do as good a one of my Missis as that, I shouldn’t mind a glass of brandy and water.”

I accepted the offer, and the sketch was soon made. By this time the morning customers began to drop in, and my drawings made a hit. I saw that, and resolved to profit by it. The result was that I made half a sovereign in the course of the morning, and I began to think that I was growing rich apace. But “light come, light go,” was exemplified in my experience, for the money I earned was soon transferred to the landlord’s till, and that evening I was penniless once more.

Before the house closed for the night, however, I had bargained with the landlord for a sleeping-room, which I was to pay for by sketching pictures of some favourite dogs and a horse of his. He was also a great admirer of prize-fighters, many of whom frequented his house, and to this day there hang in golden frames, in the parlour of the “— Arms,” sundry portraits of illustrious bruisers who did me the honour of standing to me, in fighting costume, for their likenesses!

I was one day sitting gloomily in the parlour, for I had grown tired of this sort of life, when a shabby-genteel young fellow entered, and was introduced to me by the landlord, who informed me he was, like myself, “an hartist.”

“Dear me,” said I, “I don’t pretend to be an artist, that is, a professional one: I am nothing but an amateur, and nothing great either.”

“Yes, but you’ve the true artist touch,” said the shabby-genteel man; “I can tell that. But talent can do nothing in London, there’s a glut of it here; the country is the place for you.”

He then said he was going to take a pedestrian tour in Kent, sketching likenesses at taverns and farm-houses, and gentlemen’s seats, as he went, and asked me if I would go partners with him?

I agreed, for I was sick of London, and the idea of walking the high road, and of seeing green fields, was enchanting. The landlord owed me a few shillings, and by parting with some sketches to a print-seller

in Long-acre, I raised about a sovereign. My companion also got some assistance from an uncle of his, and we started down the Mile-End road on our way to Rumford, in Essex.

On some future occasion I may describe my wanderings in detail; for the present it is enough to say that as my companion was one of those who "are nobody's enemies but their own," and as I was too much like him, although we got plenty to do, we never could save money. The consequence was, that after many a week's misery and privation, such as I pray God I may never again experience, I parted from my friend, and resolved to return to London.

But how? The winter had set in; for days and days it had rained incessantly, and the people were so boorish that they scarcely knew what a likeness meant. Besides, they were miserably poor, and so it was quite useless to push our business just then. How was I to get back to London, which, spite of the sufferings I had undergone there, had for me a charm?

When I parted from G—— I had not a penny in the world, nor had he, or he would have made me share it; and there I stood at the door of a public house in the little town of B——ee, sheltering myself from the "driving, dashing rain" as well as I could, and gloomily pondering on the future.

It was Friday morning—fifty-three long miles lay between me and the metropolis, and there I wished to be by Saturday night. In London, a wet Sunday is endurable; in the country I had experienced it to be miserable indeed.

As I strolled through the streets, I had seen a placard announcing that Signor —— would exhibit his feats of magic to the people of B——ee on that evening. An idea struck me. I had many months before done this man some little favors by puffing him in a newspaper with which I was connected. Had he forgotten it? if not, perhaps he would return the obligation now. I sought and found him at the White Hart Hotel.

He was showily dressed; a great, staring, gaudy-patterned vest was covered with a network of gold chains, and his fingers glistened with rings—success had evidently attended his efforts. At first he did not know me, but when I mentioned my name, he cordially shook my hand and took me into his room.

"The very man I wanted to see," he said. "Those 'pars' of yours did me a world of good; I'm now going though all Kent and Sussex, and want a little puffing. Can you write me a dozen 'crack' notices, and I'll pay what you charge?"

How my heart leaped. My pen was soon at work, and, five shillings in pocket, I grasped a stout ash stick and started for London.

But I could only travel slowly. The rain had ceased, yet the roads were heavy with cloggy mud. At the end of fifteen miles I gave out, tired and hungry, and supped ravenously at a roadside ale-house off eggs and bacon. The remainder of my journey I need not detail. Suffice it to say, that weary, foot-sore, wet, and again penniless—for I had spent my last threepence at Ilford for refreshments—I entered the world of London as the bells from hundreds of steeples and church towers were striking ten at night.

The first thing to do was to seek refuge from the storm, for it now rained in torrents. By selling a waistcoat—I had two—I raised sixpence, with which I made my way to Drury Lane, for in that neighbourhood I knew there were plenty of cheap lodging-houses. I had never entered one of these receptacles of human wretchedness, but necessity now compelled me, and I determined to seek out one where I might remain until Monday at least. My experience there shall be recorded in another chapter.

CHAPTER II.

THE laudations of solitude, which were pronounced in the sickly sentimentalisms of Zimmerman, and which have been echoed almost ever since by milk-and-water scribblers of verse and prose, are all very

well on hot-pressed paper, and when elegantly bound; but I should like to see the man or woman who, alone and friendless, at dark midnight in the streets of London, when the chill unintermitting rain plashes on the greasy pavement, or descends in whirling eddies from gutters, and sloping roofs—I say I should like to see that individual who would chaunt its pleasures or its "praises."

Assuredly I was by no means inclined so to do, as I turned from the Strand, and passing through Wych Street, entered Drury Lane. Travel-soiled and shabbily attired, I slunk along, fearing to meet with some one who knew me, among the crowds who were now hurrying from Drury Lane, and other theatres in that locality. In one hand, which was thrust into the depth of my trousers' pocket, I clutched, as with a miser's grasp, my last sixpence; that sole remaining, now inestimable treasure, which was to procure me lodging and food during the next twenty-four hours. Never before had I so vividly experienced the value of money.

Partly to escape the still increasing crowd, and to hold a consultation with myself as to the mode of making my sixpence go as far as possible; to hold, in effect, a private committee meeting on the "Ways and Means" department of my limited exchequer, I withdrew into the entrance of a dark passage. Fingering the coin, I began to debate the question whether it should be expended in rest or food. I needed both, for my limbs ached, and I felt faint from hunger. How difficult seemed it, the question to decide! The price of a bed for the night would be fourpence, then twopence would remain for nutriment; and how much can be purchased for such a petty sum in London, only poverty-stricken people know. Opposite me was a baker's shop, which I eyed wistfully, and at length I almost made up my mind to invest twopence in bread, but then I remembered that it would be dry eating, and I hesitated. A pint of porter, I thought, would be "victuals and drink too," but then how should I fare on the morrow, when all the shops would be shut, and the newspaper offices, at which possibly I might succeed in earning a sovereign, be vacant?

Thus was I hesitating when a sudden light illuminated the dark alley in which I was standing. It proceeded from the bull's eye of a lantern, which, while it perfectly displayed my face and figure, left its bearer in gloom. After it had glared on me a moment, a gruff voice exclaimed:—

"Here, young feller—come out o' this—wot be arter here?"

By the light of the gas-lamps outside I saw that my questioner was a policeman, on whose whiskers, which half covered the lower part of his face, drops of rain glistened, causing his mouth to resemble a damp bird's nest. Conscious that my only offence was poverty, I did not shrink from his scrutiny; but irritated by his interference, returned his glance of inquisitiveness with one of fierce scorn.

That was of very little use. I might as well have defied the Monument. A stern "move on!" was all the notice he took of my frown. Then, as I strolled gloomily along, recommenced the argument on what was to be done with the sixpence. Some one, I forget whom, has written,—

"The woman who deliberates is lost."

It might have been added, the *man* too, for my indecision, if not attended with fatal consequences, was productive of utter bankruptcy. My failure, indeed, was but a small amount, but the disaster could not have been more complete had I been as rich as Rothschild, for I had sacrificed my *all*, and a millionaire could lose no more.

Just after I had quitted the policeman, the dazzling show of one of the great London gin palaces attracted my notice. A huge, stucco-fronted building, with balconies, pillars, pilasters, cornices, and balustrades, with a brilliantly illuminated clock on its summit, and a monstrous lamp over its ever swinging doors, it towered above the neighbouring dwellings, which in gloom and filth huddled around it. It was all ablaze with light; immense chandeliers of cut glass hung from the painted ceiling, and along the front was displayed in letters, formed by jets of gas, the name of the house. Though all glare and glitter, it presented itself

"No Pharos to the wanderer's eye,"

For the ray which gleams from the ocean lighthouse warns *from* danger, whereas those which shone from this source, allured to it. As I stood by the door hesitatingly,—for I was cold and faint,—the plate glass doors swung aside, and I caught sight of the interior. Sixpence would at least procure some temporary oblivion—or an hour's excitement! The temptation was too much, and in a spirit of utter recklessness I rushed in.

Of all the hideous sights which the great metropolis of England presents to the eye of an observer, none can be more fearful than that presented by the interior of a great gin palace in a poor neighbourhood, especially on a Saturday night. Accompany me, reader, in imagination, into this one, whose interior I have endeavoured to sketch, and let us survey the fearful spectacle.

Entering, as we do, suddenly, from the gloom of the street, our eyes are at first almost dazzled by the blaze of countless lights reflected from mirrors of lustrous plate-glass, mounted in richly-carved frames. The counter is adorned in front with massive pillars of the finest mahogany, and covered with polished metal. On a tastefully constructed arch is arranged a number of glittering silver-plated taps, which communicate with casks of various kinds of spirits. On another part of the counter is the splendidly constructed beer engine, whose pipes terminate in butts of malt liquor, arranged in the vaults below. Ah! these vaults! who shall tell of the infernal doings there? Vaults of death they may indeed be called, for within their carefully guarded precincts, the publican mixes, with his liquors, the ingredients which shall diminish their cost to him, and prove poisonous to his wretched customers above. There, with "The Licensed Victualler's Guide" in hand, a book which contains receipts for making wines of all kinds without the aid of one single drop of grape juice, and which can only (save by deep cunning) be purchased by publicans, he converts one hogshead of porter into two, by the addition of liquorice to sweeten, bullock's blood to give it body, copperas or blue vitriol to adorn it with a fine frothy head, and *coccus indicus* to increase its intoxicating power and to simulate strength. There he prepares his pernicious trade, and poisons without the fear of the gallows before his eyes.

Gorgeous is the mirror-covered partition behind the counter. On shelves supported by splendidly carved and gilded brackets, stand rows of highly ornamented bottles, containing cordials whose very names are fragrant. A door, with mahogany sashes and cut-glass panes, half open, allows a glimpse of the bar parlour—the *sanctum sanctorum* of the landlord and landlady, the latter of whom, a red-faced, corpulent, over-dressed woman, with a staring patterned dress, a cap like a bouquet of artificial flowers, and no end of gold chains over her ample bust, may be observed "counting out the money" like the king in the child's story book, and quite as regal-looking as that apocryphal personage.

These London landlords are keen fellows, and it is a common custom of theirs to employ the prettiest and most daintily dressed females to purvey their poison. How sweetly that black-eyed girl in the blue *mousseline de laine* smiles as she hands a glass of liquor to the dissipated-looking young man about town who lounges over the bar uttering slang and *double entendres*! How she simpers at his compliments, and then scornfully draws a pint of humble porter for the crossing sweeper who has just crept in to "wet his whistle." Next Sunday the "swell" and the bar-maid will go on a trip together to Greenwich or Richmond, at the expense of the former, and twelve months hence the latter will be seen in a ragged shawl and gown, perambulating Oxford Street at midnight. Most probably her companion will be on his way to a penal colony. There is nothing improbable in this—such things happen every day in London.

Not an inch of space is wasted. Along the wall in front of the bar counter stand a row of gigantic casks, gaudily painted and labelled with seductive names. In variegated letters "Cream of the Valley" is recommended to pocket and palate, the said "Cream" being a compound of alcohol, sugar, turpentine, and water, with a little juniper oil to flavor it. Well named is it "of the Valley," said valley

being that of the "Shadow of Death!" On another, "Old Tom" puts in his claims to consideration; and "Sparkling Ales" dazzle thirsty beholders. "Barclay & Perkins," "Meux's & Co.," or "Buxton's Entire," are recommended in all the glory of gold and varnish; and "Double Stout" asserts its claim to be the monarch of malt liquors. But let us turn from the commodities to their consumers.

In glancing over the pages of a newspaper a few days since, I met with the following graphic description of the interior of a London gin palace, on just such a rainy evening as the one I have been alluding to. The writer says:—

"There the homeless, houseless, miserables of both sexes, whether they have money or not, resort in numbers for a temporary shelter; aged women, selling ballads and matches, cripples, little beggar boys and girls, slaving idiots, pie-men, sandwich-men, apple and orange women, shell-fish mongers, huddled pellmell, in draggle-tailed confusion. Never can human nature, one would imagine, take a more abject posture than is exhibited here; there is a character, an individuality, a family likeness common to the whole race of sots; the pale, clayey, flaccid, clammy face, pinched in every feature; the weeping, ferret-like, lack-lustre eye, the unkempt hair, the slattern shawl, the untidy dress, the slipshod gait, too well betray the confirmed drunkard. The noises, too, of the assembled toppers are hideous; appalling even when heard in an atmosphere of gin. Imprecations, execrations, oburgations, supplications, till at length the patience of the grog-seller and the last copper of his customers are exhausted, when, rushing from behind his counter, assisted by his shopmen, he expels, by force and arms, the dilatory mob, dragging out by the heels or collars the dead drunkards, to nestle, as best they may, outside the inhospitable door. Here, unobserved, may you contemplate the infinite varieties of men self, metamorphosed into beasts; soaker, tippler, topey muddler, dram-drinker, beer-swiller, cordial tippler, sot. Here you may behold the bare-footed child, hungry, naked, clay-faced, hanging up on tiptoe that infernal bottle which makes it and keeps it what it is, and with which, when filled, it creeps home to its brutal father or infamous mother, the messenger of its own misery. Here the steady, *respectable* sot, the good customer, slides in, and *flings* down his throat the frequent dram; then, with an emphatic 'hah' of gratification, drops his money, nods to his friend the landlord, and for a short interval disappears."

This sketch is so accurate that I need not add to it one single "touch." Fancy then, reader, that among such a motley multitude I stood, sixpence in hand, waiting to be served with a supply of that fancied panacea for misfortune and misery—GIN.

There stood my whole fortune before me in a liquid shape, for I had boldly ordered a quartern of the best. "As well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb," I thought, mentally quoting an old and very convenient adage. Then again I repeated to myself the consolatory couplet which tells us that

"This truth of old was Sorrow's friend,
Times at the worst will soonest mend."

And, feeling that I could not well be worse off, I relied on a lucky turn of the wheel, forgetful of the fact that the writer of the rhymes I have quoted, when he sunk to *his* worst, committed suicide in a Holborn garret, and, spite of the prodigious genius afterwards lauded by Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Southey, was huddled into a pauper's grave, which yawned at midnight to receive all that was mortal of "the sleepless soul that perished in its pride."

The drink disposed of, then recurred with tenfold force the question of how I should pass the night. Had it been fine overhead, I should, without a moment's hesitation, have decided to perambulate the streets. Often had I done so for the purposes of curiosity, for I had always felt a strange pleasure in wandering along through the streets of a great city when the thoroughfares were deserted. But it is a very different thing to do a thing from choice to what it is to do it from necessity. This plan of passing the night was therefore out of the question. At last a bright thought struck me.

There was, and is still, in the neighbourhood of Somerset House, a tavern which was frequented on

Saturday nights by various persons who during the week were employed on cheap newspapers and periodicals. For this class of persons it was a regular house of call. There the author met the artist who was to make a design for the next number—there the proprietor of “Adventures” of some romantic rascal doled out to his scribbling hacks his miserable pay—and there some of the most brilliant talkers of the day sat in a private parlour to discuss politics and potatoes. I knew many of these people, and in the forlorn hope that I might meet with “luck,” I started thither. The place was crowded, and I soon found myself among some old acquaintances.

The drink went round freely, and no one was more welcome than myself to as much as I could take—but, prodigal as my friends were of this, I knew that an application for the loan of five shillings would put an end to their pleasantry. I might have swam in liquor, had I been so minded, and I now bitterly repented the parting with my sixpence—but it was late, and I made up my mind for a sojourn under one of the arches in the Adelphi, after the house should have closed.

“Hilloa, old fellow! why, where did you spring from?” said a muffled voice, and a heavy hand was laid upon my shoulder. I turned hastily, and beheld a seedy-looking individual, in whose pale, intellectual face even habitual intoxication had not as yet quenched the divine spark.

I had known the young man (he was scarcely three and twenty) for some time. When I first made his acquaintance he was sub-editor of a principal London morning paper, a position for which his fine talents well qualified him. As graduate of an Oxford University he had greatly distinguished himself, and for brilliant acquirements, as well as great natural abilities, I have seldom known his equal. But the perilous situation he held proved his ruin. Once—twice—he was discharged; but so useful was he, that as often was he re-instated. At last a drunken blunder hardened his employers’ hearts, and from the powerful writer in an influential journal, he sank to the condition of a hack writer for the publishers of Holywell-street, the emporium of “cheap literature.”

Cowper says, that

“Misery still delights to trace
Its semblance in another’s case.”

I know not how this may be in general, but I felt a pleasure in thus falling in with one almost as forlorn as myself; and it seemed the delight was mutual, for he dragged me *nolens volens* into a parlour close at hand, where our appearance was hailed with a shout.

“Talk of the devil, and his horns are sure to appear,” laughingly observed a cadaverous, hard-featured looking man, who had a deep mahogany coloured glass of brandy and water before him, and a long pipe in his mouth.

He was the publisher and proprietor of several cheap serials, by which he had made a considerable sum of money—but of all the mean niggardly wretches that ever crawled, he was, I think, the most contemptible.

After a time he beckoned me to a seat by his side, and pushed his glass towards me. I declined, however, to drink, for I well knew that his proffered civility was not without an object. The fellow had cheated me in a transaction, and I did not feel inclined to have any further connection with him, poor as I was.

He made some proposals to me in a whisper, but I declined. At length, irritated, I petulantly exclaimed, loud enough to be heard—

“It’s useless—I say, your price don’t suit, and I won’t write a line for you—I’d starve first.”

“And that you seem likely to do,” said the fellow, eying me.

“Wouldn’t you do his epitaph?” exclaimed my friend the ex-sub-editor.

I was half mad with anger, vexation, and drink, and swore that nothing on earth would afford me greater pleasure.

“Let’s have it then,” cried several of the company—and with savage glee I dashed off the following, which I flung over to B—, who read them aloud amidst roars of laughter, for their subject was any-

thing but popular among the members of his craft:—

Reader! beneath these churchyard stones
Lie W—’s flesh and bones;
Who published, for the sake of pelf,
Lives of great rascals like himself!
Authors, rejoice! for unto you
He’ll never more apply the “screw;”
And think, when he who robbed you here
Shall at the judgment seat appear,
That Satan will exclaim with glee—
“My faithful servant, come with me!”

Judging from the plaudits showered upon this precious production I had gained a victory; but I had made an enemy:—a very ridiculous thing to do, for we are sure of having enough of these, as we travel along Life’s road. However, I thought not of that just then—I hope I am wiser now.

The other persons present now became clamorous for their own epitaphs, which, being in a rollicking humour, I rapidly furnished, lampooning each man’s faults or follies without mercy. It was amusing to observe how delighted they all were with seeing their neighbours’ foibles exposed, and how thin-skinned they became when their own were touched upon. However, I cared not who were pleased or otherwise, and kept rattling on without mercy.

“You seem to have a ready pen,” remarked a person who, save by name, was a stranger to me. “Now I want a thing done, and I fancy you are the man to do it.”

I nodded, and asked for the particulars. They were soon given, and terms agreed upon. It seems that W— was also a cheap publisher, and wished to get up a Comic Almanac for the ensuing year. It was not much to my taste to write cheap fun, but I had no alternative—and when he gave me half a sovereign as earnest-money, I would, had he desired it, have undertaken to pen anything from an Essay on the Differential Calculus to a panegyric on poetry.

I never hear a man say that he despises money, without at once setting him down for either a fool or a hypocrite. Let us talk of it as the root of all evil if we choose, but we do not in our inmost souls believe it to be so. What a magic change the touch of that small golden ten-shilling piece wrought in my feelings! Two hours ago I seemed the most miserable being alive, and now I trod on air. Twice or thrice I gazed on the auriferous reality before I fully comprehended my good fortune, and then came the desire to enjoy that which it had the power to procure. Flushed and excited, I hurried back to the company of my friend the ex-editor, and his companions; for of course I could do no less than treat those who had been liberal to me. I have but a confused recollection of what afterwards occurred: three scenes, however, gleam out indistinctly from the background of memory, the one blending with the other like dissolving views.

“Another bottle, landlord!—no, hang wine! bring ‘glasses round,’ and all stiff ones,” says a remarkably tipsy gentleman whom we have installed in the chair, and who enforces his authority by vigorous thumps on the table that made the glasses ring again.

Before my eyes now appear I know not how many sights, and the tumblers of grog are multiplied amazingly. At the request of the chairman I become vocal, and attempt to “promote harmony.” When thoroughly myself, singing is the last thing I think of attempting, but I am equal to anything now, and extemporise a song, tagging a rhyme to the name of each person present at the end of every stanza. I believe I rattled on to the tune of the “Old English Gentleman;” it might have been sung, and no doubt was, “with variations.” Be that as it may, every personality was received with applause, and I was in the seventh heaven of tipsy vanity. Since then I have been told that I howled like an idiot. I have no doubt of it; though had such been hinted at the time I should have felt indignant, of course.

Other persons sing—fresh glasses are emptied—the landlord enters, and intimates that it is past shutting-up time. The police, he says, will interfere if we make so much noise. We all consign the police to perdition, and prevail on the landlord to bring us

in "night caps." They come, in the shape of tumblers of punch.

The room feels oppressive. I can no longer see the picture on the wall opposite, or rather I see a kaleidoscope copy of it—all its gaudy colours shifting and changing in the most remarkable and inexplicable manner. For the every-day affairs of the world—the landlord included—I entertain the most sublime contempt, and join my friends in the defiant chorus of "We won't go home till morning;" unnecessary assertion, seeing that it is exactly half-past two o'clock a.m.

I have a dim perception of being pushed, with others, out of the parlour, and of feeling the chill night air as the door of the tavern is slammed behind me. Legs, in the useful and legitimate sense, I had none. Somebody seemed to be converting my arms into pump handles, and something like "G-goo" night ol'fellow, all r'right!" buzzed in my ears. I remember no more.

* * * * *

Well, that is strange! Is it a dream or reality? I am lying on my back, feeling much as I suppose Gulliver did when the Lilliputians fastened him to the earth by thousands of cords. Right over my head the full round moon is shining, dark heavy clouds now and then sweeping swiftly across her disc; and the wind is howling and shrieking among the chimneys. I try to move, but cannot. Certainly I must have died last night, and they are burying me, for tramp! tramp! tramp! go the feet of men who are bearing me along. I can see their hats on either side of my head and feet, which are on a level with the top of the shop windows. I attempt to sit up and see who they are, in vain. My head is sore, and I feel something trickling down my cheek. I try to raise my hands to remove something from my eyes, for their lids seemed glued together; but I cannot use them, for they are confined as if by bonds of steel. Still we go on; tramp! tramp! tramp! the men's measured footfalls echoing drearily through the deserted streets. A burning thirst assails me; my eye balls are bursting; my every limb is on the rack. With a heavy groan I sink once more into unconsciousness!

* * * * *

The grey, leaden light of morning is slowly stealing through a window barred with iron stanchions, and revealing four walls, bare and grim. A low inclined plane of wood stands against one of the walls, and on the hard stone floor lies what I at first take for a sort of bier; but as the light increases, I see that it is furnished with straps and buckles, and a hard rude pillow, which now is all stained with blood. I shudder and forcibly close my eyes, but pain forces me to re-open them, and I discover that my temples are bandaged and plastered, and my face all stiff with clotted gore. My hands are free, but the marks of some instrument remain on my wrists. Confused and wretched, I turn with difficulty on my hard couch and doze. How long I sleep—or dream, for it is not sleep—I know not; but I am awakened by a hand placed on my shoulder. I look up, and a surly face meets mine.

"How d'ye feel now?" asked a rough yet not an unkind voice.

"What is the matter? Where am I?" I enquired.

"Keep quiet, and you'll be all right by-and-bye; lie down, and I'll come again soon," was the answer.

"Water! water! water! and, for mercy's sake, a little brandy; for I feel as if dying," I replied piteously.

The man handed me a jug of water; I again asked for brandy.

"Not a drop," said the man, and I was again left alone.

In about an hour came another and a superior-looking personage. He gazed at me long and anxiously, and then addressing me, said:

"You had a near chance of it; how do you feel?"

"Horribly; but where am I?"

"You were found last night lying in E—— street, bleeding and insensible. We took you on a stretcher to King's College Hospital, and got your face dressed, but you tore off the bandages like a madman, so we had to put on the handcuffs. You'd have beat yourself to death if we hadn't."

I shut my eyes and groaned; then, knowing that I had some letters and papers in my possession, I asked about them.

"They're taken care of, and what money we found on you as well; but there wasn't much of that—only two shillings," he replied. And he added, "You're in the —— street station-house now, and will have to go before a magistrate."

"For what?" I asked indignantly.

"For being drunk and incapable of taking care of yourself; you wasn't disorderly, though, and a fine of five shillings will be all. I'll have your case called on first, and no one shall know it, for I see you an't used to this sort of thing; but don't bother yourself, we've had members of Parliament here before now."

So it had come to this! I turned once more on my uneasy bed, and, knowing the worst, fell soundly asleep.

CHAPTER III.

WHEN I again awoke, the bells from scores of church towers were pealing forth their harmonious invitations. How their tones jarred upon my over-excited brain, in which they called up long-forgotten associations!

Long forgotten! did I say? let me recall the words. There is no such thing as forgetting! and there are pains as well as "pleasures" of memory, such as Samuel Rogers sings about. Years and years may have elapsed since some trifling occurrence, and it may seem to have floated down oblivion's river long, long ago; but lo! a casual word, or a chance look, or a passing odour will vividly, and as by a charm, recall it. Heaped upon memory's shelves lie innumerable records of the past! Vainly do we sometimes seek for one of them, as among long-neglected libraries we hunt for some wished-for book of old times; but suddenly, and when least expected, the dust of years blows off, and, in all its freshness, the Past again appears before us. There are those who believe that in the future state, Memory will constitute one of the chief curses of the Lost—the "Son, Remember!" of the parable, ringing for ever in their doomed ears. Be that as it may or may not be, in the remote world, certain is it that here the knell of Hope is, too often, but an awakening peal of sad Memory.

And now these "Sabbath chimes" on that dismal morning brought to mind old scenes and familiar faces! The reader may imagine what my recollections must have been under such circumstances, for I shall not attempt to describe them. Enough to say that the only gleam of comfort which visited me in that miserable place, was the certainty that no one who could be pained by such knowledge, was aware of my inhabiting it.

"The doctor will be here to see you presently," said a sergeant of police, who came in whilst I was ruminating on the best way of getting my freedom—"So you'd better come out and wash the blood off your face;" and he conducted me to a room where warm water and sponges were provided.

The fomenting greatly refreshed me, but when it was over and I looked in the glass, I was horrified. My eyes were discoloured, a severe cut or rather gash extended over the right temple, and there were sundry contusions and abrasions which by no means added to my personal attractions. Add to this, that every limb seemed to have been dislocated, and some idea may be formed of my sensations.

Presently the police surgeon arrived, and I told him how it happened that I became his patient. As I unconsciously made use of some technical phrases, he soon became aware that I was a brother Medico; that was at once a passport to his consideration.

"Now," said he, after I had concluded my account, you wouldn't like *yourself* to be seen out of doors to-day, so keep quiet until the afternoon. It's dark at four o'clock, and at that time I'll get you bailed out. You can get a lodging somewhere for to-night; go before the magistrate quietly to-morrow morning; pay the fine, and then keep steady; if you don't, you'll pop off the hooks as sure as my name is—."

I knew that well enough; if I had a cast iron constitution I could not long go on at such a "fast" rate. Late hours, dissipation, and night work on a newspaper, had, as it were, lighted the candle at both ends. If not looked to, it inevitably would speedily burn out!

The surgeon procured for me some little amelioration of my condition, so I was suffered to remain in a private room, instead of returning to the common cell. Some meals were provided for me, but appetite had departed, and only a craving for brandy. To get this was out of the question; so, in suffering and silence dragged on the long gloomy day.

At length four o'clock came, and with it my liberation, for as the good surgeon had promised, he himself went bail for my appearance next morning.

The streets, when I emerged from the station-house, were dull and silent. A yellowish fog hung over all objects, and through it the gas lamps presented a faint and sickly light. The rain had ceased, but the foot-walks were greasy and sloppy, and a more dismal prospect altogether never met my view. Now and then a funeral procession passed me, for it was just the time when the London poor usually buried their dead; and the dull, deep tolling of the funeral bell added to the melancholy of the hour.

Just as I was turning out of Drury Lane into Oxford Street, I overtook one of these dismal processions, in whose train there was an unusual number of persons. It seemed as though every miserable house in the neighbourhood had sent forth its swarms of wretched people to follow the coffin, which was being borne to its narrow receptacle. A vague feeling of curiosity induced me to mingle with the mob that increased every moment, and which, by the time it had reached the churchyard, had increased to thousands.

"Poor soul!" exclaimed a woman near me, "*her* misery is over;" and she added with a wild oath, "I hope *he'll* swing for it!"

I ventured to ask her who the gentleman might be who was so fortunate as to possess her good wishes.

"Jemmy Donovan, down in Short's Gardens; that's his wife in yonder coffin; he killed her by throwing her out of the window in one of his drunken sprees."

"Donovan, the well-known prize-fighter?" I exclaimed: for the name was familiar enough to me. Indeed, he was one of the gentlemen who had, as I have before intimated in these memoirs, sat to me for his portrait in the parlour of the "— Arms."

"That's him—the wretch!" and her execrations were echoed by a troop of women who surrounded her.

"Clear the way," growled a policeman, as he opened a passage in the crowd for the clergyman and clerk, who now advanced to the head of the coffin. The bearers then lifted the latter, and the tones of the minister were heard.

The funeral service was soon hurried through; the clergyman being evidently anxious to get home to his mutton and old port; the snuffing clerk being no less desirous to repair to the next tavern, and discuss his gin and water. The last words died away, and with indecent haste the grave digger flung in the heavy clods on the coffin. As this was done, a wild howl rose from the Irish mourners, and then all hurried from the dismal city Golgotha.

Sick at heart, I too quitted the spot, and a profound melancholy stole over my spirits as I mused upon this terrible example of the effects of Intemperance. What the woman told me was true enough: a murder *had* been committed, and that moment the miserable husband was awaiting his trial at Newgate. By way of episode, let me chronicle the result of this tragedy of real life; and that it *is* real, the records of the Old Bailey testify.

Justice, in the metropolis of England, follows swiftly on the heels of crime. Three weeks after the funeral scene I have referred to, the prize-fighter was tried and sentenced to death; although it was proved that he really loved his wife; as much, that is, as a drunkard and a prize-fighter could love; and that he only ill-treated her when in liquor. But one night, when accidentally left alone, he hung himself in the cell: and thus, anticipating the hangman, the drunkard and murderer consummated his crime by suicide!

"Ah!" some highly respectable and reputable reader will, perhaps say; "ah! such occurrences no doubt are common enough among the lower classes; but respectable and educated people do not drink to such an extent; such tragedies do not occur in *our* circles—a gentleman never disgraces himself or his friends, now a days, by drinking—for the age of the 'five bottle men' is past."

You think so, sir, do you? Now just look into a neighbouring cell to that in which lies the miserable murderer Jemmy Donovan, and whom see you there? Why as respectable-looking a man as yourself, my complacent friend; aye, and still within a month, the world thought him as honest as it now thinks you. And who is he? Listen, and I will let you hear his history.

There is, not five minutes' walk from the scene of Donovan's crime, a large theatre, the manager of which appears to be on the pinnacle of prosperity. As the bills say, "no expense is spared" in his getting up of pieces, and everything bespeaks him a man of wealth. In a fashionable suburb of London he has a fine villa, and there he gives fine dinner parties; and he is a well known connoisseur in fine wines. People do say, that when Mr. W— appears at his theatre he is often "rather high," and the empty champagne bottles on the floor of his private room speak of anything but self denial. A very great man is he, and as his house is crowded every night, he has the reputation of being wealthy. The newspapers laud his liberality and taste, and the actors and actresses drink his health and chant his praises. He has also a high situation in a public office, and so if Mr. W— lives a little fast, why no one can doubt that he is a "highly respectable man."

One fine morning, however, as Mr. W— was superintending the rehearsal of a new play, with "gorgeous scenery, dresses, and decorations," two detective police officers asked for him and took him into custody, on a charge of embezzling the funds of the office I have referred to. He was tried, found guilty, sentenced to twenty years transportation, and then everybody said—"Ah! just what I expected." And as it came to pass, the prize-fighter of Short's Gardens, who had committed his crime after gulping down gin, was the companion in crime of the gentleman of — Villa, who, stimulated by champagne, had murdered his reputation. Drink ruined both—as each confessed—and proved, that whether it reigned in the pot-house or the parlour, it was alike a mocking devil!

On the very same morning that the prize-fighter's corpse was found, the gentleman's body was also discovered, lifeless—he too had hanged himself! thus performing a more terrible tragedy than his own stage had ever witnessed.

As I before said, I write no fictions. I had seen both the persons just alluded to, and the manager I myself looked at as he stood at the bar of the Old Bailey, a shivering felon.

* * * * *

The sufferings and sorrows of the last twenty-four hours had so exhausted me that I now began to crave for solid food. I had two shillings still remaining—with a portion of it I purchased a cheap dinner, and then, just as the bells were chiming for evening service, I strolled out once more into the gloomy streets. At length the skies became clear, and almost without knowing how I got there, I found myself on Waterloo Bridge, immortalized by poor Hood in his "Bridge of Sighs," and gazing with strange emotions on "the dark flowing river" below.

CHAPTER IV.

THUS I stood, in the gloom of the evening, looking over the parapet of that, the finest bridge in the world, and moodily speculating on LIFE—its chances and its changes.

Aye, and of DEATH, too! of the thousand ills from which it might be at once a relief and a refuge—of the dreamless sleep which would terminate the long agony and fever of waking Life;—of an instantaneous

and voluntary ending of existence and its countless woes!

But would a self-sought grave be a refuge from the storm?—*that* was the question; and there was another inquiry also—Had I any *right* to plunge blindly into futurity—perhaps into perdition?

* * * * *

As I looked up for a moment from the rushing river, I beheld a meteoric star shoot from its sphere, and after a brief but brilliant transit, become quenched in utter darkness. Fit emblem, I thought, of many a son of Earth, whose genius only blazed to light his pathway to the tomb. Once more I leaned over the bridge and bent my gaze downwards: Onward flowed the inky stream with accelerated rapidity, as it swept through the arches of the bridge. Twirling eddies disturbed its surface, and long lines of foam flecked it, as it left the bases of the piers. Yet in that turbid surface I saw, as it were, pictures of my past life; scenes as vivid as those we observe in a Claude Lorraine mirror. Persons are sometimes, when on 'long voyages, attacked by the Calenture, a sickness produced by an intense longing for home. To their morbid imaginations they behold in the bosom of the waves green fields and well-known spots; and so complete is the illusion, that, unless disturbed, they frequently plunge into the treacherous depths. So now, a sort of Calenture appeared to afflict my mind; and as Byron says of the sensation produced by standing on the brink of a precipice,—

"You scarce could gaze a minute,

Without an awful wish to plunge within it,"

so I likewise felt a fearful inclination steal over me, to leap from that bridge of Waterloo.

How long I thus mused I know not—I never knew. I was at length roused from my reverie—I had crouched into the corner of one of the stone recesses, for the wind swept bitterly past—by the conversation of some other unfortunates who had also sought that partial shelter. Several of them were females, and all were young. Pitiful, indeed, was it to see how the former shivered in the chill night air, (for their attire was scanty enough, even for summer,) but far worse was it to hear their blasphemies and foul words, and these uttered by voices which had derived their huskiness from the habitual use of gin. One of these girls was certainly not more than thirteen years old, yet she might have taken a first-class degree in slang at any college of villany in the universe.

Boom! boom! came over roof, and street, and river, the sound of the great bell of St. Paul's, as it announced the hour of eleven. I had been many hours on the bridge.—And now I discovered that passengers across it, going towards the Strand end, became frequent. Singly and in groups passed hurriedly by me hundreds of poorly-dressed men, women, boys, and girls—all pushing forward to one point. One would have imagined from their jokes, as they hurried by, that something mightily amusing was in prospect. I was not long in doubt as to what it really was.

"Wonder wot *he's* doing on now;" said one of the youths near me to his companion; and he added, "they has wot they likes the night afore; couldn't I pitch into tripe and anyons if it was me—oh, no!" and the fellow applied his thumb to his nose, and took what is technically called "a sight."

"Tom'll die game, I know," remarked one of the girls. "He's a regular brick. Lord! how he used to go and see the hangings kisser!"

"Come along," remarked another of the party, "or we shan't get nigh the drop;" and the whole of them, closely wrapping their rags around them, joined the eager crowds who were still hurrying towards, as I now knew, the Old Bailey, in which stands Newgate prison.

I soon learned from the passers-by that a young man was to be executed within eight hours from that time—Monday is always the hanging day in London—and hence this unusual travel over the bridge at midnight.

It was fine over head, and as the night had so far worn away, I determined to reserve what money I had intended for a lodging, and appropriate it to the purchase of a breakfast. Though by no means

partial to such sights, I resolved to go to the Old Bailey. In the bustle and excitement, I thought the dark hours would pass less wearily away, and so I followed, and made one of the multitude, which now, in dense masses, thronged up Ludgate Hill.

And here I must, as sportsmen say, "tug back" for a short way in the course of my narrative. When the reader perceives why I do so he will pardon me for the digression.

Six weeks before the period to which I am now especially alluding, I was compelled, in the exercise of my newspaper duties, to attend at the Old Bailey in order to furnish particulars of the execution of a woman, for the special delectation of a leading evening journal. The wretched creature about to suffer had been a servant to an old lady in Westminster, whom she had strangled in order to procure a five pound note—which note, after the crime was committed, the murderess discovered to be a counterfeit one.

In order to have a good place, I secured a seat in the window of a public house, directly opposite the scaffold, for which I, or rather the proprietor of the journal, had to pay five shillings. At about an hour before the time of execution, then, I got with much difficulty through the crowd, and established myself in my position.

I had not long been seated, when another individual entered the room. He, too, I saw paid five shillings—a sum which I should not have thought, from his appearance, he could have at all afforded. He was a young man of apparently eighteen or nineteen years of age, and bore the appearance of a worker at the anvil. He had a low, sulky, hang-dog sort of a look, his eyes were bloodshot, and a great heavy under jaw gave an animal expression to his countenance, and a short, thick, bull-neck, conferred on him quite a stamp of ferocity. A short black pipe was stuck in his mouth, and in his hand, as he entered, was a jug of "Dog's Nose," a compound of beer, gin, and nutmeg. This he set down on the sill of the open window, and then sprawling on a chair, he began whistling an air which was at that time remarkably popular among the ragamuffins and rascals of London.

"Drink, mister," said the blacksmith, pushing his jug towards me. The invitation, however, I respectfully declined, the consequence of which was, that I evidently sank many degrees in the young fellow's estimation. He was glum and silent for some time, but at length he knocked the ashes from his pipe, and said:—

"By—! only think of the girl's being scragged for a bad flimsy. Curious, now, aint it?"

I said something or other, I forget what, and then he became quite communicative about the hangman; it was evidently a favourite topic of his.

"I knows Calcraft well enough; I have smoked many's the pipe with him. He's a shoemaker up in the New North road, just out of City Road. Meet him in the street, and he dressed so spicy you'd take him for a reg'lar swell."

"Indeed," I remarked.

"Yes," said he, a "hout and houter," "Vy," (the fellow was a real Cockney,) "not long ago Calcraft went down near Oxford to tuck up somebody or 'nother, and on the coach he got into talk with a green college chap. The hangman wore a nobby tile, a green cut-away, and white kid gloves—reg'lar spicy—and the young scholar, thinking he was a buck, took him to his rooms at one of the universities. Blowed if he didn't introduce him as 'his friend Mr. Calcraft,' to one of the old tutors; but it came out, and he got dismissed for keeping company with the 'finisher of the law.' Prime lark, warn't it?"

"Well," he went on, "but Billy Calcraft do turn 'em off prime; don't keep 'em long either; just one step on the trap-door, a turn of the rope, and then ——" The brute indicated what followed by a jerk of his head and a "click."

"You seem fond of this sort of thing?" I hinted.

"I just am, and no mistake. Vy, I ha'n't missed a hanging this five year—what d'ye think o' that, old feller?"

Being on the spot myself just then, I could not with a very good grace say much in deprecation of his taste, so I held my tongue.

It was positively awful to see how he gloated over

the spectacle. As the moments flew by he actually became impatient, and cursed the time because it did not fly faster—it was rapid enough for the poor victim within. When St. Sepulchre's bell commenced tolling eight, he leaned from the window, his eyes glaring with excitement, and his frame actually quivering with joyful anticipation. A cheer actually burst from his lips when the jail door opened, and the criminal, pinioned and pale, tottered forth. As his practised eye marked her emotion, he ground his teeth, and cursed her for her "want of pluck."

No sooner had the drop fallen, than he hurried from the room. I remained to pen my notes, and when I went down stairs half an hour after, the execution hunter was sitting, surrounded by a select circle of admiring listeners, to whom he was relating his hanging experience in general, and his impressions respecting the affair of that morning in particular. He was very much intoxicated, and glad to escape his recognition, I hurried away.

And now reader, let me take up the thread of this narrative just where I snapped it a few moments ago.

When I reached the end of the Old Bailey, on Ludgate Hill, the crowd became so dense that it was with the utmost difficulty I could force my way through the somewhat narrow street, towards the well-known "Debtor's door" of Newgate. All along the road to this place, the taverns were opened, and doing a thriving business. The gin palaces were thronged, and coarse jokes respecting the coming dreadful event were heard in all directions, for Hang-Monday was a holiday in the calendar of crime. It seemed that on this particular occasion, more than usual interest was felt in the criminal. He was an apprentice who had killed his master whilst intoxicated with drink and passion, and the crime had been perpetrated in the most daring manner in the very heart of London. Thousands of apprentices swelled the mob, and most of them seemed to think that they were doing honour to Tom Wicks (for that was the victim's name) by attending his execution.

Just as two o'clock sounded from the church steeples, a bustle was seen in front of the prison, and a huge wooden machine was drawn out from the great doors. Men then began to work by the light of torches, and yell after yell of savage satisfaction was heard, as the different portions of the scaffold were put together. And, will it be believed? when the upright and the cross-beam constituting the gallows, were raised and fixed, one huzza burst from the crowd. Some women, with children in their arms, indeed, shuddered and turned pale; but the jeers of their brutal companions speedily banished all feeling, and they became as fierce and foul as others. Many of the persons present had come provided with bottles of spirits, and whenever a poor shivering infant wailed or wept with cold, or screamed from the pain caused by pressure, it was dosed into quiet by gin. And fearful was it to see how those infants sucked in the poison—that poison which caused the gibbet to be erected, which, in the fog and mist, loomed up before the eyes of men and women who, even then, were preparing for it new victims.

Three, four, five o'clock; and the crowd became terrific. I stood close to the barriers, and at times the pressure of the enormous host behind me was fearful. At length, by a mighty wave, as it were, of that sea of humanity, I was dashed forward, taken off my feet, and borne I knew not whither. Instinctively I clutched at a lamp-post as I was being carried past it, and holding firmly on, the current swept by, and left me safe in an elevated position.

At length seven o'clock came, and with it the gray light of morning; and what a spectacle did the light reveal! Not a spot within sight but was covered with haggard, anxious, staring humanity; and all in that crowd had come to see a fellow-creature die in mortal agony. But none appeared awed; the very boys appeared to enjoy the scene.

As the appointed hour—that of eight—drew nigh, still greater became the anxiety. At length the bell of St. Sepulchre's commenced tolling one—two—three—(cries of, "Hats off!")—four—five—six—seven—eight.

And before the last bell-note died away, the debtor's door opened, and the buz of twenty thou-

sand tongues died away into silence. Then came the doomed man forth, preceded by a clergyman, and followed by the executioner and other officials.

From my raised position, I could without any intervening obstacle, gaze on the criminal as he stood under the beam. Possessed with a horrible curiosity, I leaned forward as far as possible, and just as the miserable wretch lifted his head to take a farewell glance at the world—his eyes met mine. I fancy he started—I knew I did—for we recognised each other!

Another instant and the white cap was drawn over the pale, wild face, a dull "thud" was heard as the rope tightened, and the quivering form of the murderer dangled from the gallows.

He was the very same young man who sat with me in the tavern opposite, but six weeks before, gazing on the gallows which had now terminated his existence. Strangely enough, too—from that very tavern he had rushed, while intoxicated, for the purpose of shooting his master in Drury Lane; and in that same tavern the officers of justice found him when they sought his capture a few hours afterwards.

The circumstance might form a powerful text from which to preach a sermon on the effect (good or bad) of capital punishment. With that subject I have now nothing to do, but I think it worthy of notice that, after five years' experience of public executions, Thomas Wicks came, somehow, to be hanged himself.

And now, after having just witnessed what drink had done in the case of another, I had to make my way to Bow Street, in order to answer a charge against myself, of which drink was the cause.

CHAPTER V.

It was soon done—that business at the Police Court. When a man is to be mulcted in a penalty, it is surprising how quickly Law, or the gentlemen who represent her, set to work. Go to one of her halls for the purpose of claiming your rights, and ten to one but you will have to cool your heels for hours, days, months, yea, and for years together, in her vestibule.

As the reader already knows, I was under an important engagement to appear at Bow Street Police Office at nine o'clock. Immediately after the execution at the Old Bailey, therefore, I hurried to a coffee-shop in Long Acre, for the purpose of snatching a hasty breakfast, and was busily engaged in despatching a cup of tea—so called, and a combination of dirt, beef, butter, and mustard—called a sandwich, when a somewhat familiar voice accosted me by name.

The voice proceeded from a dim corner of a dingy box of the gloomy coffee-room, and then I first became aware that I was not the only occupant of that particular compartment. That indeed was not much to be wondered at, for the "box" in question was situated in a remote part of the establishment, and was chiefly patronised by shabby-genteel gentlemen, who had private and particular reasons for avoiding mixed society. Occasionally, too, "casual reporters," as they termed themselves, or "penny-a-liners," as the public profanely styled them, would seek the solitude of this box for the purpose of there writing out accounts of some "mysterious occurrence" which they had manufactured out of nothing, or next to it—or of highly exaggerating the feelings of an afflicted mother whose son had an imaginary escape in Cheapside.

"Who'd have thought of seeing you here?" said the owner of the voice, and a pale, singular countenance became apparent, as its owner shuffled along the table and stopped opposite to me.

This unexpected old acquaintance was one of the strangest beings with whom, in a somewhat strange career, I have ever met. He was quite young, not more than eighteen years of age, though apparently older, and his exterior was anything but prepossessing. He was tall and clumsily built, with great broad shoulders, long ungainly limbs, hands like small shoulders of mutton dangling out of his coat cuffs, and feet which seemed to spread out when—

ever he planted them on the ground. As if conscious of this awkwardness of frame, he shambled uneasily through the streets, and seemed to shrink from observation. Instead of looking one steadily and manfully in the face, he glanced at you from under his black brows, and then averted his large, dark eyes, with a sinister expression anything but agreeable. Sometimes he looked actually wild, and I verily believe at times that he *was* insane. If so, however, there was never any lack of method in his madness.

"Why, you look as though you hadn't been in bed last night, like myself, Thompson," I said, as I looked at his matted black hair, which was tossed in all directions over and around his pale grimy face.

"Bed!" and he laughed; "no, nor for a week, either—but where have *you* been, to get your eyes put into such a pretty suit of mourning."

With such as him it would have been folly to disguise the truth, so I told him the whole story.

"And so you're going to do the 'penitent' before old Ballantyne; he sits this morning, and that's lucky. Here, Tom, hand out the bottle;" and so saying he roused from the farthest corner of the box an individual whom I had not hitherto observed—so dim and gloomy was the morning.

"Tom and I are getting up an article for next week's 'Sporting Times,'" said Thompson—"that is, he's giving me facts and dates, and I'm licking them into shape. Come, old chap, sharp's the word."

But Tom had been too sharp; for from his great coat pocket he produced only an empty soda-water bottle. During his companion's occupation with pen and ink, he had drained it of its contents; and now, with the utmost coolness, he demanded a "tizzy" of me for another "kervarten."

"Thompson," I said, "I've only that one shilling and a few pence left, and I can't spare it. If old Ballantyne fines me to jail I must go."

Tommy Roundhead glanced at the coin, and twitched it from between my thumb and finger in a moment and vanished. I saw it was no use to grumble, so I patiently waited his return. Presently he came back with a supply of spirits.

"Here," said he, pouring out a glass, "just swallow this, and don't funk ven yer gits afore the beak. Ben and I'll see ye're all right if you be fined, von't ve Ben?"

"If we get the tin for this article, Tommy," remarked Thompson, cautiously; "and when your case is disposed of, come back here, and I'll make you look fit to be seen—but there's nine o'clock striking, so take another pull and be off."

Shading my bruised eyes as well as I could, I hurried to the Police Court, and was lucky enough to be called on before many persons had assembled. I suppose, despite my face and seedy habiliments, I had something of the gentleman in my appearance, for the Magistrate surveyed me, I thought, with pitying interest, and even spoke kindly when he asked what I had to say.

I knew well enough that an apology would be of no use whatever; so I said boldly that I had, I suppose, taken a little too much, and that it had overcome me.

"Has he been here before?" asked the magistrate of an officer. The answer was in the negative.

The Magistrate surveyed me keenly for a few minutes, and then asked—

"What name did he give?"

I had, when interrogated at the Station House, adopted the rather uncommon *pseudonyme* of "John Smith," and so his worship was informed.

"Ah!" he said, "I thought he had been before me on another occasion;" and then addressing me, he added—

"You seem to have suffered enough, so I shall not fine you; but let this be a warning. You are discharged."

The sitting official might well say that he "thought he had seen me before." I had *faced* him on a former occasion, but it was at the dinner table of one of the most accomplished men in London—a distinguished poet—and a prominent member of the House of Commons. Thank God! he did not entirely recognise me through my rags and bruises; but if ever shame and mortification seized me, it was when standing at the bar of that municipal tri-

bunal. What a change!—scarcely six months before he had challenged me to champagne, and now I shrunk from his gaze in a Police Court!

Hurrying back to the coffee house, I soon rejoined the persons I had recently left there, and acquainted them with the luck I had experienced.

"And now, said Tommy Roundhead—(this was his real name, as thousands are aware, for he was as well known in the sporting world as 'Bell's Life' is—I say *was* known, for he died two years ago, of intemperance, in St. George's Hospital, London)—"and now, as you've done me many a good turn, I'll put your optics to rights, for I can tell yer they look precious queer as they are, and no mistake."

"It's no use Tommy—they won't lose their blackness for a month to come—leave them alone," said I.

Tommy Roundhead was a little man, but, like most diminutive people, had a high opinion of himself. In his early days he had been better off—as he took care to inform every one, when over his cups he got maudlin. Unluckily Tom was fond of sporting, and sporting men soon cleaned him out. His friends abandoned him, and from the exclusiveness of the betting stand he sank to the society of the rascals of the turf and the ring. For years he was the sworn friend and companion, or "squire," to a celebrated bruiser called "Deaf Burke;" and when that worthy died, from hard knocks and harder drinking, poor Tom, having lost his only friend, was tossed about from tavern to tavern, and from night-house to race-course, picking up a precarious subsistence by sponging upon old acquaintances, or selling lists of the running horses. I now learned that he was communicating some particulars of his friend, the "Deaf 'un's," career to Thompson, who was constructing from them an article for a cheap sporting serial.

"I aint no Sawbones," remarked Tom, as he produced from his pocket a little tin box, which had formerly held "Warren's brilliant blacking;" "but if I don't make your ogles as natural as they ort to be, vy it's a vonder. Lor' bless yer! you should ha' seen how I used to titivate up the 'Deaf 'un's' blinkers arter a fight. I prefer's launcing them directly arter a blow; but if the blood has got clotted under the skin, vy nothing but painting 'ill do."

"Painting?" I asked, in some surprise.

"Yes, painting; didn't you know as I vas a har-tist? Vy, I've painted more hi's than the president of the Royal Academy hisself—han't I, Ben Thompson?"

"It's true enough,—," said the young man just appealed to. "Tommy is eye-repairer in ordinary to the pugilists of England:—aye, and he practises among ladies too. Many's the black eye he has concealed by his 'so potent' art. So, while I'm finishing this article, let him try his hand on you. He can't make your eyes look worse than they do, at all events."

"Well, Tommy, what do you charge? I've no money now, but——"

"Oh, you're velkim as the flowers in May," said he—"sit down."

And from the box the little man produced some pigments, which he mixed on the back of a plate with milk instead of water. Then, like the celebrated Miss Mowcher, he mounted a table, seated himself on its edge, and placing my head in his lap, commenced operations.

He was evidently dexterous in his profession, for he manipulated with his brushes, and blended his tints, in quite an artistic fashion. And he had caught some of the technical phrases of art, too.

"That'll do," he muttered to himself. "Vell, I'm blowed if Pickhisgills could lay on a better flesh tint than that. Now for a leetle more shadder—ah! that's the caper—Rumbrum could'nt beat it!"

And the rival of the illustrious Rembrandt and of the celebrated Mr. Pickersgill drew back his little bullet head, and with bleared visual organs gazed proudly on his completed work.

I looked into the glass, and was really surprised. Tommy Roundhead had painted over the bruised skin so well that no traces of my late accident were visible, except on very minute examination.

"As true as I'm here alive," said Tommy Roundhead, "I've had a sov'rin afore now for such a job."

as that, and I shan't charge you no more than a kevartern of 'Old Tom.'

"That's not dear for high art, however," said I, with a miserable attempt at a pun.

"Vell, call it eye hart, or vot you will; you looks all the better for it: come tip!"

I handed him all my remaining coin, and a quartern of gin soon made its appearance.

"While Thompson's a finishing that story about the 'Deaf un'—here's his jolly good health—I mean here's luck to our noble selves—I'll tell yer a rig as happened not long ago, and its as true as gospel."

"Go on," said I.

"You've heard, in course, of Sir Wincent C—, Vell, he vos a vild un, but he had as fine a vife as you ever clapped hi's on. Von night, arter he'd been down to Newmarket and had lost a heap of money, he vent home mad drunk and knocked his lady down. Sich a pair of hi's as she had, Oh, Lor! It so hap-pened as she vished pattickler to go to the play a night or two arter, but how to conceal her bruises vos the question. Von of her maids know'd my old 'ooman, and she told her as how I could doctor up her bruises so as nobody should be the wiser by candle-light—and I vos sent for."

"Vell, she vos a handsum lady, and no mistake: and as I vos a painting over her skin, every now and then she'd open her eyes and a'most blind me. I tell you (and Tom placed his hand on my arm) I've seen a good many brutal things in my time, but the striking that 'ooman' peered to me the brutallest thing as ever was done by man. No, 'twarn't done by a *man*—no one as deserved the name *could* have done it. But then, after all, it warn't Sir Wincent as hit her, 'twas the cussed drink!"

"Arter I'd a finished the job—and I tell you I made quite a picture of it—she gave me a five poun' note—(I vish I'd a job of that sort now; not as I wants a 'ooman to be hit a purpose, you know; but if the fellers do drink, they *will* vollop their vives, and I might as well get something out of it) and says she, 'Are you sure it von't come off?'"

"Varranted fast colours, your ladyship," says I, "so as you don't vet it."

"I'll take care o' that," says she, and I mizzled.—Vell: I took it in my head as I'd go to the play that night too, as I was so well off, and I got a good place in the pit.

"Between the hacts I stood up, and who should I see a sitting in the werry front of the boxes, but Lady Wincent C—! And blow me if she didn't look pooty. I tell you, young man, I was as proud of my work as ever any artist was to see his pictur hanging agin' the Academy wall. The vorst on it vos, I couldn't put my name to it, for 'twas Nature itself, and *she'd* be sart'n not to recommend the painter.—Talk about triumphs of hart! vy, *there* vos von! and the painter as produced it was an obscure individooal in the pit. That's how genius is sarved now-a-days, young man!"

Tom took another drain to wash down his indignation, and proceeded.

"All at once, just as the piece was over, I seed the people in the boxes staring towards the place where Lady Wincent vos sitting, and presently some on 'em begun to titter, so I looked round, and you could have knocked me down with a feather! The play had been a very affectin' one, and poor Lady Wincent had set off a crying. The natural flow of her feelings in course washed out her artificial eyes, and the ladies round her seeing her face grow dark, fancied she vos struck with a fit, and one of 'em emptied a bottle of—O de summat, over her handkercher, and clapped it to her face. Ven she took it off, my vork was all ruined, and there the poor 'ooman sat in the middle of the dress circle, with a pair of the most dreadful black hi's you ivir see! And the vorst of it vos, Sir Wincent vos speaking with a bally girl behind the scenes, and seed the 'exhibition' of his rascally vork—and bad as it vos, I must say it vos much more lasting than mine."

"There, that's done," exclaimed Thompson; and Tommy Roundhead was despatched with the M.S. to the office. "And now," he said, "how shall we raise a dinner between us? They don't pay me till the article is published."

"I have nothing," said I, "but as my eyes are fit to be seen now, I'll go and see what can be done. I have a little thing to do for —, and perhaps he'll

advance a crown—I've had ten shillings already."

"Not he," growled Thompson, "unless you send him some 'copy.' But look you—have we nothing on which our respected uncle would make us a slight advance?"

Just at the critical moment, Tommy Roundhead returned from his errand, and joined in our deliberations.

"Vell, look here,"—said he; "here you two coves are hard up. Vell, I'm used to it—you aint. Now both on you have often done me a good turn, and I never forgets a kindness, nor forgives an injury. So here's this ring," and he extracted from the depths of a greasy pocket book, a large old-fashioned wedding-ring, adding "Vaughan'll lend six shillings on this, and that'll carry us over the day, and by then summat else'll turn up. Here (to me) take it. I swore on oath never to pawn it *myself*, but *you* can, and I'll soon have it out again."

There is an old saying, and I know it to be a true one, that "no one helps the poor so much as the poor." Not long before this occurrence, I had ventured to apply for a trifling loan to a wealthy man who had a great reputation for philanthropy, and whom I had many times obliged with my pen. But he wriggled, and was "very sorry, but he couldn't—no, he couldn't indeed;" and he politely presented me with a tract, wishing me good morning; and I went away—no matter how; perhaps I blessed him—and abandoned all belief in philanthropy from that moment. But here was a poor, broken-down fellow, whom the rich man would have spurned, with a heart that put to shame the hollow thing beneath the philanthropist's broadcloth. "Ah! there are many charitable people amongst the rich and the religious," says, perhaps, the reader. Possibly so, my good sir; but I don't believe in advertised benevolence, or in that charity which gives blessings and withholds beef! I know many a man who will afford "material aid" to a plausible pretender to patriotism, for the sake of the *eclat* of the thing, as much as for the cause of the "down-trodden," but who, if the unromantic applicant for relief should say with Canning's needy knife-grinder—"Story!—God bless you, I have none to tell, sir!"—would be roughly repulsed with—"I give thee six-pence!—I will see thee hang'd first." Perhaps, indeed, a tract may be substituted for the condemnation, but the repulse is none the less bitter.

To return to my narrative. I took the ring to a pawnbroker's. It was in the dingy purlieus of Clare Market, and the compartment into which I thrust myself was crowded with miserable wretches—many of them children, waiting to be served by the shopman, whose heartless jests and insolence towards already miserable poverty, made me bend my fingers involuntarily. My errand was soon accomplished, and I emerged from the den by a side door in a passage. Immediately opposite this was another side door, belonging to a gin-shop, and from the numbers who pressed from the pawnbroker's to the gin-shop, I should imagine that one greatly flourished in consequence of the proximity of the other. Indeed, I afterwards learned that both establishments belonged to one man—so he caught the poor wretches with both hooks.

"And now," said I, whilst Tommy Roundhead was frying our dinner in the tap-room of a tavern to which we had adjourned.—"I'll try and dash off a song with a moral to it—Old Dugdale, perhaps, will buy it. Suppose I take as a subject **THE PAWN-BROKER'S SHOP?**"

"That'll do," said Thompson; "Ship's on Fire—and Gambler's Dreams—and Old Arm Chairs—and Eliza Cooky; trash of that sort is all the rage now. Yes; try the 'Pawnbroker's Shop,'—any jingle will do—people don't look for poetry in songs now-a-days. So that it has a good chorus, it will go down."

"After all," said I, "bits from real life take with the million, so I'll just put into rhyme what I saw this morning in Clare Market."

And by the time the chops were done I had rattled off the following:—

The Pawnbroker's Shop.

'Tis Saturday night, and the chill rain and sleet
Is swept by the wind down the long dreary street;

The lamps in the windows flicker and blink,
As the wild gale whistles through cranny and chink;
But round yon door huddles a shivering crowd
Of wretches, by pain and by penury bowed;
And oaths are muttered, and curses drop
From their lips as they stand by THE PAWNBROKER'S
SHOP!

Visages hardened and seared by sin;
Faces, bloated and pimpled by gin;
Crime, with its plunder—by honesty's side;
Beauty in ruins, and broken-down pride;
Modesty's cheek crimsoned deeply with shame;
Youth's active form, Age's fast failing frame,
Have come forth from street, lane, and alley, and stop
Heart-sick, weary, and worn, at THE PAWNBROKER'S
SHOP!

With the rain and the biting wind chill'd to the bone,
Oh! how they gaze upon splendour, and groan!
Around them—above them—wherever they gaze,
There were jewels to dazzle, and gold to amaze!
Velvets, that tricked out some beautiful form,
Furs, which had shielded from winter and storm;
Crowded with "pledges" from bottom to top
Are the chests, and the shelves of THE PAWN-
BROKER'S SHOP!

There's a tear in the eye of yon beautiful girl,
As she parts with a trinket of ruby and pearl;
Once as red was her lip, and as pure was her brow;
But there came a destroyer—and what is she now?
Lured by liquor, she bartered the gem of her fame,
And, abandoned by virtue—forsaken of shame!
With no heart to pity,—no kind hand to prop,
She finds her last friend in THE PAWNBROKER'S
SHOP!

The spendthrift,—for gold, that to-morrow will fly!
The naked,—to eke out a meagre supply;
The houseless,—to rake up sufficient to keep
His head from the stones through the season of
sleep;

The robber,—his booty to turn into gold;
The shrinking—the timid—the bashful—the bold;
The penniless drunkard, to get "one more drop,"
All seek a resource in THE PAWNBROKER'S SHOP!

'Tis a record of ruin—a temple whose stones
Are cemented with blood, and whose music is groans;
Its pilgrims are children of want and despair;
Alike, grief and guilt to its portals repair!
Oh! we need not seek fiction for records of woe;
Such are written too plainly wherever we go!
And sad lessons of life may be learned as we stop
'Neath the three golden balls of A PAWNBROKER'S
SHOP!

"That will do," said my companion—"and the
Pawnbroker ought to be much obliged to you. Tom
shall take it to Dugdale after dinner. Come, here's
luck to it!" and a pint of foaming porter vanished.

So, after we had eaten our fill, our Mercury was
despatched, and in half an hour therefrom, he came
back proudly with five shillings, which he spit upon
for luck, and then flung triumphantly on the table.

CHAPTER VI.

The young man of whom I spoke in the last chap-
ter was, in many respects, a remarkable specimen of
a rather remarkable class. There was scarcely any-
thing he could not do; and (for he was by no means
what is called a "Jack of all trades, and master of
none,") few things that he could not do well.
Through his rags and filth—for he had an inveterate
dislike to soap and water—a practised eye could not
fail to detect traces of the gentleman; indeed, his
manners were, at times, even polished. That he
had enjoyed a good education was evident; but it
was easily to be perceived that he had frittered his
mind away upon a multitude of subjects, and so was
now from habit unable to concentrate his faculties
upon any one topic whatever. There are in the
regions of the equator, vast tracts of water covered

with shifting weeds that have been gathered by cur-
rents setting in from distant sources. Through this
tangled mass, the course of a ship is greatly retarded;
and it sometimes happens that, borne away by the
floating mass, the doomed vessel, unable to extricate
itself, is carried, spite of wind and canvass, to rocks
and ruin. So are there many minds, which, instead
of progressing through the broad, deep, clear chan-
nels of thought, become impeded by a weedy sea of
"universal knowledge," or that which seems to be
such, and thus prevented from exploring some one
great deep of thought thoroughly, they are drifted
along until all power to grapple with great subjects
is gone, and high and dry lies the mind-wreck on
the beach of neglect and despair.

With his universal talents, in such a place as Lon-
don, however, this young man might have lived res-
pectably, if not luxuriously. There was scarcely a
subject on which he could not write; and his style
was of that easy, careless character, which never
fails to charm the desultory reader. Nothing came
amiss to him, from a song to a sermon; and I am
not joking when I assert that I have seen discourses
from his pen which would have shamed the solemn
pomposities of many a professed preacher.

"Sermons!" the reader may exclaim in surprise
—"sermons from the pen of the frequenter of the
pothouse?" Even so, my astonished friend—but
you do not as yet know a hundredth part of the
mysteries of London life. Why, let me inform you,
that many an elegant discourse which charms the
"miserable sinners" in elegant, velvet-lined pews,
in handsome churches, in the fashionable quarters of
the British metropolis, are the composition of some
"poor devil author" who concocts them over a pint
of porter, or a glass of gin and water, in the back
slums of London. There are hundreds upon hun-
dreds of broken-down college men about town, who
are glad enough to earn a few shillings this way;
and, dear peruser of these pages, were we together
in London streets, your arm linked in mine, I could
take you to a shop where you could purchase an
original sermon for ten shillings—or you might
order one to a certain text for a special occasion,
and for the sum of twenty shillings be supplied with
it, in legible writing, (to pass off as your own manu-
script,) and so, fraught with the condensed learning
of Howe, Tillotson, Stillingfleet, Jeremy Taylor, or
Barrow, you could enter a pulpit and pass yourself
off as that much bepraised personage—a popular
preacher.

And a very good trade these sermon-mongering
tradesmen make of it. I knew one—a miserable
hunks, whose delight it was to grind the faces of his
scribbling corps, and purvey his wares at enormous
prices to his clerical patrons—snug vicars, hunting
parsons, and lazy lecturers, who used to sneak in at
the side door when they wished to purchase the pro-
ducts of other men's brains. I am half ashamed to
own that some of my own compositions have been
sold to this man and delivered from the pulpit, and
one of my greatest sources of amusement used to be
to repair to a dim old church in the outskirts of
London, and hear the criticisms on my own compo-
sition pronounced by the people as they quitted the
church, the good folks never supposing that the sit-
ter in the pew beside them was thus favoured with
their unbiassed opinions (sometimes, indeed, not
by any means flattering) of his productions. And
in a similar way to that in which sermons are "got
up," for sale, speeches—pamphlets—novels, and such
like, are manufactured for the benefit of those who
cannot write themselves, but who are willing to pay
well for the credit of authorship. Many there are
that sail under false colours, and I know a man at
this moment who is delivering a course of lectures
descriptive of travels in the United States, which
were written for him by a person who, like the lec-
turer, has never been out of Great Britain!

To return, as the French say, to "our muttons."
With all his versatility, poor Thompson could not
do more than just keep his head above water. To
speak less figuratively, he had hard work to avoid
absolute destitution. He never needed to seek
literary employment, for there were many pub-
lishers only too glad to avail themselves of his ready
pen. But so strong was his love of drink that no-
thing could drag him from the tavern while he had
a penny in his pocket. The only way in which

articles could be got from him, was to lock him up in a room, with a limited supply of gin or brandy, and on no account release him until his task was finished. And even then, sometimes, he would get an extra supply, the not unfrequent consequence of which would be, that a fit of delirium tremens would put a period to the work, and almost hurry life itself to a close.

The poor fellow was an orphan, and on the great sea of London life he was tossed to and fro, with few to pity and none to save. Alas! there are hundreds, nay, thousands of such in that great city—that reservoir of talent! And here I might reveal tales of suffering there that have fallen within my own knowledge, which would cause the most careless reader to shudder. But I forbear—the “harrowing” is not exactly my *forte*, and I do not feel inclined to make my readers “sup off horrors.”

One bright summer morning, about six months after the coffee-room adventure, as I was walking along Holborn, I met a friend who, after some commonplace chat, suggested that I should accompany him to an inquest which he was to report to a certain newspaper—the *Chronicle*, I think.

“And by the way,” said he, “when did you see him last?”

“See who?” I enquired.

“Why, Thompson, to be sure,” said he, “hav’nt you heard of it?”

“Heard of what?” I asked, with a vague conviction that something dreadful had happened.

“Why, that he cut his throat yesterday morning—and what on earth else would you have expected?” replied P——.

What else indeed *could* have been looked for—I thought, when I remembered the habits of the unfortunate young man. I now learned that he had been taken in hand by a publisher, who had engaged him to compile a work, in order to do which, it was necessary that he should frequent the reading-room of the British Museum. To enable him to appear there with credit, a new suit of clothes was furnished him, and for a time he applied steadily to work, having, by a mighty struggle, abandoned altogether the use of ardent spirits. His application inspired confidence, and when the work was half completed some money was advanced, ostensibly to pay his lodging, but scarcely had he become possessed of it before he fell in with an old companion, who invited him to drink. The first glass led to a second and a third; and in a low public house in the Borough he remained for a whole week, until all his money was gone. Insane from liquor, he sold his new clothes for some wretched rags and two sovereigns, though they were worth six or seven, and then ensued another debauch. This money expended, he was turned out of doors by the landlord, and when half sobered he ventured to call on his friend the publisher, who did not at first recognise him in his pitiable plight. As soon as he did so, feeling indignant, he ordered him from his door; and remorse succeeding to the unnatural excitement, he stole into a bookbinder’s shop during the time the workmen were at dinner, and with a knife cut his throat so effectually that death must have almost immediately ensued.

And thus was self-ended the career of one, who, but for his propensity to “drown care,” as it is falsely called, might have shone a brilliant star in the hemisphere of genius.

I am writing these chapters in the hope that they may operate as a warning, principally to the intellectual portion of the community, and therefore I shall not apologise for, in this portion of my narrative, making purely personal matters a secondary consideration. There will be opportunities enough for me to resume the thread of my story by-and-bye. The educated man is just as much, nay, perhaps more liable to suffer from the perils of drink, than the illiterate and uncultivated. And how many instances have we had of great minds having been debased and ruined by the social glass! Look back into the history of some well-known literary men, and shudder as you gaze. Think of the brilliant beings who have flashed and then prematurely faded; of men of ardent hopes and high resolves, who have become “drivellers” and “shows,” and then acknowledge, with Samuel Johnson, that this vice of drink, if long indulged

in, will not fail to render “knowledge useless, wit ridiculous, and genius contemptible.”

I knew one man—than whom, perhaps, another more profound, brilliant, versatile, or mentally vigorous, did not and could not exist.

“If,” says a recent writer—“if we needed an instance or example more striking than any other within our memory, of genius, talent, health, learning and abilities, sacrificed in the most wanton manner to the demon of intemperance, we should take Maginn. The genial bacchanalian spirit which characterises so many of his poems and humorous prose pieces burst forth eventually in a fearful flame in his own soul—a flame which burnt away energy and life. Not only the literary man, but every one who, in his weary hours, is tempted to fly to ‘the cup’ to refresh his wasted energies, may learn, by the example of Maginn, to distrust the dangerous consolation.”

Nearly always “in liquor,” and constantly in difficulties, his life was a strange medley of dashing recklessness and secret misery. Puns distilled from his pen’s point like drops of quicksilver, and never sat he at that table which he did not set in “a roar.” For months together, although earning large sums by his writings, he dared not venture abroad, except in darkness, for fear of arrest. And yet even a grim catch-pole could afford him a joke! Hear how he parodied Wordsworth’s celebrated “Rainbow” lines—

“My heart leaps up when I behold

A bailiff in the street;

’Twas so since from one I ran:

’Twas so even in the Isle of Man;

’Twill be so even in Newgate’s hold,

Or in the Fleet!

A trap is hateful to a man!

And my whole course in life shall be

Bent against them in just antipathy!”

In a recent number of the *Irish Quarterly Review*, Dr. Maginn’s besetting sin is thus alluded to:—

“He now turned for comfort and inspiration to the foul fiend, brandy, which has been the cause of misery and death to so many men of genius. We regret the errors of Addison and Steele; we sigh at the recollection of poor Moreland, the painter, working at his last picture, with a brush in one hand and a glass of brandy in the other; for he had arrived at that terrible condition in which reason could only reach him through intoxication; and Maginn, not so fallen as this, sunk deeply. The weary hours of lonely watching brought no resource but that which copious draughts of the liquid could supply. Health was fast fading away; the brightest years of life were past for ever; and, as the dim future lowered, he gazed upon it under the influence of the demon which enthralled the brilliant souls of Addison, of Sheridan, of Charles Lamb; and which sent the once stalwart form of Theodore Hook, a miserable, wretched skeleton, to the grave. He was neglected by his party—he was forgotten by many of his former friends; and, as we looked upon his pitiable condition, and compared what we then saw him with what he might have, and as we hoped would have been, we often recalled the fearful passage of Charles Lamb:—

“When you find a ticklish relish upon your tongue, disposing you to a witty sort of conversation, especially if you find a preternatural flow of ideas setting in upon you, at the sight of a bottle and fresh glasses, avoid giving way to it, as you would fly your greatest destruction. If you cannot crush the power of fancy, or that which you mistake for such, divert it, give it some other play. Write an essay, pen a character or description—but not as I do now, with tears trickling down your cheeks. To be an object of compassion to friends—of derision to your foes; to be suspected by strangers—cursed at by fools; to be esteemed dull when you cannot be witty; to be applauded for wit when you know you have been dull; to be called upon for the extemporaneous exercise of that faculty which no premeditation can give; to be set on to provoke mirth which procures the procurer hatred; to give pleasure, and to be paid with squinting malice; to swallow the draughts of life destroying wine which is to be distilled into airy breath to tickle vain auditors; mort-

gage miserable morrows for nights of madness; to waste whole seas of time upon those who pay it back in little inconsiderable drops of grudging applause—are the wages of buffoonery and death."

Maginn died in misery and destitution, when in the very prime of a "wasted life."

The following anecdote respecting Dr. Maginn was communicated to me by a friend, and as I believe it has never been published, I here present it as a specimen of what drink will lead a man to do, even when the welfare of those near and dear to him is concerned.

Maginn had a daughter, to whom he was deeply and tenderly attached. She was about to be married, but her father had no portion to give her. Suddenly he determined to keep steady and work. He did so—abandoned drink, and soon earned enough to enable him to furnish a house splendidly for the young couple, who accordingly were united, and set off on the wedding tour—on their return from which, they were to occupy their pretty new dwelling.

On the evening after the marriage, Dr. Maginn walked to the well-furnished house—sat down on a sofa, and afterwards walked over the apartments well pleased.

"Ah!" said he, "I have some reason to be proud; all this is the work of my own hands." Then he sent for a friend to come and admire it also; and after all had been inspected, the two sat down in the drawing-room.

"Now," said Maginn, to the old woman who was left in care of the house and furniture, "go and fetch a bottle of brandy, and we'll drink the young couple's health."

The spirit was fetched and drank; and then more was procured. Other persons were also sent for, and the beautiful drawing-room was soon converted into a scene of bacchanalian revelry. Songs were sung, speeches were made, and healths drank, and so it went on all night. The ball had now fairly been set in motion, and on it went. The Doctor's money was all gone, so article after article of furniture was sent out and pawned! Then went the piano—then sofas—beds—all but the chairs they sat on, and the table. At last these went too, and the carousers sat on the floor round a punch-bowl! Nor did they cease their revels until the bride came home to a house from which every article of furniture had been drank away!

Young man—educated, intellectual though you may be—read the above and tremble! With the intoxicating glass in your hand, reason ceases to assert her claims; and safe though you may deem yourself, remember that greater men than you have fallen, even whilst thinking their foothold most secure.

I repeat it—no man, how gifted soever he may be, is safe, if he indulges in drinking propensities. Stand in the very pulpit, if you will—even there you are insecure. I knew, some years ago, a preacher in England. He was the son, too, of a preacher, and was himself truly eloquent. In appearance he was absolutely majestic, and his congregation idolized him. But he drank in secret; and by-and-bye, as all such secrets will, this one oozed out, and he left his church in disgrace.

What then! Better had it been for him that he had never been born! He sank never to rise again; and within two years from his occupying a pulpit, and preaching to crowded and fascinated assemblies, he became the orator of a pot-house. Incredible as it may appear, his favourite amusement, when drunk, was to mount the table, and make a mock sermon to his besotted companions. And I have been told by those who heard him on such occasions, that despite the pernicious influence of beer and tobacco, he would occasionally exhibit magnificent bursts of eloquence, showing that the mind was beclouded, not destroyed. I never saw him thus myself, but I often heard him in his best days, and I am glad that I did not witness the eclipse of such a star.

The end of that ex-minister was fearful. He died forlorn and raving, "in a worst inn's worst room;" and his case is by no means without a parallel.

But what need of multiplying instances such as these? I venture to assert that among my readers, there is not one who cannot call to mind some one

person or family known to him, whose happiness has not been perilled by intemperance.

* * * * *

Let me close this discursive chapter with another bit from this, my fragmentary autobiography.

All day long I had been wandering through the crowded streets of the metropolis—aimless, almost hopeless, and with a strange savage feeling growing within me. I had experienced disappointment after disappointment, and I began to regard all mankind as a common enemy. Suddenly, as I was looking into a cheap periodical shop window, I remembered my engagement with the Holywell Street publisher, to write him the material for a Comic Almanac. The fall I had received, and my subsequent station-house adventure, had quite banished it from my mind, but I now rejoiced to think that all was not quite a blank. To be sure, when one is in circumstances of sorrow and distress, it is hard to write at all, much more so to be funny on paper. But there was no help for it; I had undertaken the job, and received pay in advance, and so done it must be. Fortunately I had one shilling and sixpence left; with three-pence I procured writing utensils—the backs of old letters supplied paper—and sixpence I expended on a meal. Then I made up my mind to become, for a short time, the tenant of a common lodging-house, and there the reader will find me in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VII.

ALONE! lonely amongst multitudes, I stood at the door of the common lodging-house. It was situated in a dingy locality. There were dingy men lounging about the doors of the houses in the neighbourhood—dingy, smoky-looking unshaven men, wherever your eye turned,—gloomy girls from whose faces were fast fading the flush of modesty; great, ignorant young men, who took tobacco continually, and were well acquainted with the vices sold in Holywell Street, and disguised in a penny paper. And there were children sitting by the gutter—little children, with the "dew of youth" on their brows, and brothers prematurely old, swearing. Terrible sight!

"How much for a lodging to-night?" I asked of the grim-faced lady who looked out of a small square hole in the wall which divided her own rooms from the passage.

"Fourpence—give me the money or the bed will be taken." I paid the fourpence, and so was made free of the house—and what a house it was!

The "kitchen," as it was called, was "parlour, kitchen, and all," for people dwelt continually in its gloomy recesses, and never went out into sunshine if they could help it. It was a congeries of small apartments, which the poor eyes of their occupants magnified into drawing-rooms. And how many pictures of faded respectability—of worn-out credit—of vanished honours—of loved and lost friends, stood out guiltless of frames, from that lodging-house kitchen, who shall tell?

There is a sort of freemasonry in misfortune. I walked into a vacant "parlour" and sat down. No one knew me, no one cared for me, and I, as careless as any, enjoyed the pleasure of poverty, and there is a pleasure in being utterly destitute; for, say what they will, poverty has its pleasures as well as its perils. Need I tell how, in this place, an unexpectedly found person became a friend? Like myself, he had bathed in misery's river, and both of us knew that baptism of misfortune. He saw I was poor—he "flew to my relief;" and in the best way too.

"I think," said he, "that we had better get something to eat."

"Something to eat!" How it gladdened my ears. I was hungry enough, but I would not eat at another's expense.

I said—"No!"

"Hungry?" asked the new made acquaintance; and he pleasantly persuaded me to his own bread.

and cheese. Shall I ever forget the pleasant face of that before-unknown friend, as he watched me eat my meal? No! his memory is green in my brain—his kindness among the things that die not. Had he invited me to turtle and turbot, the pleasure would not have been half as great. Looking through Time's telescope, I spy among the *nebulae* of the human hemisphere, some clouded stars, but bright and luminous among them is that humble friend of mine.

There was a scholar, too, in that lodging-house. He was well versed in mathematics, but he had not the slightest idea of doing anything else than teaching the children of great men. He looked grave, "swettled" at Greek, bought books and spectacles and looked learned. He was one of those men who think that reading makes a man wise—forgetful of the fact that to read one must understand. I rather liked him, for he liked Scott's poems, and Byron's, and so did I.

* * * * *

There are several persons sitting near me. One of them is a little lame man. I did not know he was lame until I saw him leave his seat. He is drawing the head of a horse. I say to him—"You can draw, sir."

"A little," he says, dismally; and then the poor painter goes to work again.

I look at him.

There he is, a poor patient man. He has to sell that picture of a horse's head to some one in St. Martin's Lane. He had been a fine artist once, but he did not much care for fame, and so he trifled with his pencil. Bending with anxious eyes over the paper on which he is tracing really spirited sketches, he cries. His thoughts fly back to what he was.

* * * * *

Another picture. There is a man who cannot be disguised. Ask him to take a pint of porter, and the answer is—"No!" One feels his misery, and is delicate therefore. He looks, just in the gloom of the evening, over the barrier of our kitchen, and asks me to lend him a shilling.

Of course I do, and I slip it into his trembling hand—trembling from the sense of something he has been of late unused to. It is my last money, but I cannot help giving it; and the poor fellow did not wish me to say that I "had so much out" that I "could not spare it."

Shall I follow this man?

Yes.

He is a broken-down lawyer—an honest lawyer, on whose shoulders the bailiff of carelessness has laid his hand. He slinks from the common lodging-house, creeps along the side of the wall, shuns the gas, and dives somewhere—no matter where.

Yes, it is of some matter. He shrinks into a lonely place and—takes a dram.

* * * * *

I get back to the miserable place in Charlesstreet, Drury Lane. It is twelve o'clock, and the house must be kept quiet, so the lawyer and the painter go up the stairs to their beds.

And now, reader, I will give you some idea of my position.

Fancy a room, about the size of a small oblong parlour, with beds along every wall, and lots of occupants for them. Imagine that you are upon a piece of wood, resembling a knife-board, and that alongside you are gentlemen discoursing quietly among themselves, on subjects which are not interesting. Then hear, in your ideas, a poor, pale, impatient man, who turns uneasily on his pillow, and coughs—coughs so terribly, that were you a believer in the curability of consumption, you would soon be converted from the error of quacks. A Welshman, who is a pianoforte maker, and a capital workman, lies not far off spluttering Welsh, and the Welsh language in liquor is a very hard dialect to understand. And now see an old man creeping to his bed, with his boy—the old man cheerful, the child sad. Oh! the curtain had need be drawn.

At length I sank into a sound sleep, from which I was awakened in the morning, about five o'clock, by the getting up of those men who had to snatch an

early breakfast, and be at their work by six. I was glad enough to leave the room, too, for its atmosphere was by no means healthy or pleasant—so I hastily dressed, and going to a neighbouring coffee-house, solaced myself with some tea and the morning papers. After that I returned to my lodgings—busied myself on the "Comic Almanac"—went out again to dinner—and again set to work until the evening. The history of a day among the idlers there I may give some other time. At present I wish to relate an occurrence that caused me to call vividly to mind reminiscences of one who not long ago filled a large space in the eye of the London literary public, and whose history was touching indeed.

Among the inhabitants of that common lodging-house, there were several who stood out conspicuously from the common herd. Spite of the disguise of threadbare clothing, brushed into something like decency, I could not but perceive that the wearers of these habiliments had once moved in a very different sphere to that which they now occupied. And the causes, too, of such sinkings in life were, in most cases, easily to be divined. The bloated face—the dull glassy eye—the furtive glance at strangers—the tremulous gait—all spoke of ravages which had been produced by other causes than that of time. Indeed the flight of years *could* not have produced such effects; for, inexorable and wearing as fleeting days and months are, their *natural* results differ very widely from those which are caused by an abuse of the powers of nature. Besides this, many, nay, nearly all the persons to whom I am alluding were still young; and the "dew of youth," but for dissipation, might yet have glistened on their foreheads.

Sitting moodily, here and there, indeed, were to be seen men whom real misfortune, but not self-inflicted, had branded with its burning touch—white-headed, querulous persons, who seemed to shrink from all association with others, and evidently felt disgraced by even unavoidable contact with them. Some of these, I learned in the course of my sojourn, had been driven to this sad refuge for helpless old age, not by their own intemperance and dissipation, but by that of persons connected with them, either by blood, or by some one of those circumstances to which all who have to earn their daily bread are liable. And greatly were these men to be commiserated; for the recollection of better days ever haunted them, and made their present position less endurable than it otherwise might have been.

"Better days!"—Two more melancholy, heart-breaking words, cannot, I conceive, be uttered. "Ah, sir! I have seen better days," is often and again the moan of some poor soul who craves our charity. And how much misery do they imply! hopes crushed—youth past—ambition quenched—wealth scattered—families parted—comfort, joy, for ever and for ever gone;—all those, and much more, are included in these two words—better days!

Examples, as I have intimated, of the blighting effects of intemperance were rife enough in the place I now called a home; and as examples, we are told, are more effective than precepts, so I, from several romances of real life which I became acquainted with, shall now select one as a warning. The reader may be assured that the narration I am about to give is strictly true.

Late on my second night, not long before the hour of closing, a stranger entered the lodging-house, and sat gloomily on a bench near the fire. He had the appearance of a broken-down mechanic, as indeed he was. For sometime he sat gazing into the glowing embers, ruefully enough, I thought; but he spoke to no one, and seemed to edge away from those near, as if he feared them.

Such a sight was by no means uncommon in that place, for a large fire was always kept blazing away; and glad enough was many a street wanderer, on cold or wet nights, to creep to its warmth and brightness. Presently, however, the superintendent of the house came in, and observing him, demanded the money for his night's lodgings. This was to be always paid in advance.

"Will ye no be trusting me till the morn's morn?" asked the stranger, in a strong, broad Scotch accent.

It was evident that most of the other lodgers considered the poor Scotchman remarkably verdant,

for many of them winked knowingly at each other, and one, in the language of Tom Ingoldsby, "Put his thumb unto his nose and spread his fingers out." In other words, he expressed his sense of the absurdity of such a request, by "taking a sight." The idea of asking for trust *there!*

"Come—pay fourpence or tramp!" said the superintendent roughly.

"For God's sake," urged the poor man, "just gie me a lodging the nicht, an' I'll no forget ye. I've walked thirty miles since noon, and have tasted neither bit nor sup."

But it was of no use—he might as well have appealed to the hearthstone as to that grim janitor. There were some, however, present, who were struck by the poor fellow's piteous appeal; and the rain pattering heavily, at that moment, on the skylight overhead, seemed as it specially came to decide that something must be done.

I took my hat from the peg above me, flung into it a penny, and then went round to raise a subscription for the Scotchman. The requisite sum, and something over, was soon given, and with more cheerfulness, too, than I have seen sovereigns subscribed by rich folks. Then a man went to his little cupboard and got some bread and cheese, and another glided from the room, and presently came back with a jug of beer. Gratefully were these benefactions received: and a pipe of tobacco afterwards made the poor wanderer of Caledonia happy.

The next morning this Scotchman came to the table where I sat writing, and with tears in his eyes thanked me for my effort in his favour on the preceding night. I soon found that he was a most intelligent man, and we fell into conversation; the more readily, perhaps, because, as I informed him, I had myself some Scotch blood in my veins. I found out, too, that he was well read in modern literature, and that his trade was that of a compositor.

We talked of Burns—of Tannahill—of Allan Ramsay—of Ferguson, and other Scottish poets, with great gusto; and then he began to lament over the misfortunes of genius.

"Just before I left Scotland," he remarked (I purposely omit his broad Scotch terms, as the reader might find it difficult to comprehend such), "I saw enough to sicken one of being a poet. You may have heard of William Thom?"

"Heard of him! Why," said I, "I knew him intimately. Many's the tumbler of whisky-punch we have discussed together."

"Poor fellow! he'll drink no more—he died a fortnight ago in Dundee; I saw him buried," he said sadly.

I had not heard before of the death of William Thom, but I was not surprised, neither will the reader be, when I relate the touching history of that poor man and true poet. His career affords a lesson so pregnant with warning to the sons of genius, that I make no apology for penning the following reminiscence of a truly "wasted life."

Here then, is my faithful reminiscence of

A WASTED GENIUS.

It is now more than seven years ago that I first became acquainted with the writings of William Thom. A publisher placed one day in my hand a thin, handsomely bound volume, and asked me to read it.

I read the book. The story of the poor author, as related by himself, strongly impressed me, for it was one of the most terrible tales of privation and suffering I had ever heard of. The author described himself as having been an operative weaver, at a small town in Scotland, but from having met with an accident, his labour became insufficient to provide for his wife and three young children. It happened that some poems which he had sent to a local journal had attracted attention, and the poor poet, like many before him, fancied that he could gain fame and fortune in London. So he left his loom, and with a little money, his wife and bairns, and a much prized flute, commenced a long, weary foot march to the metropolis.

On the road his sufferings were great. His infant child died one night, as the miserable family huddled together under a tree, for other shelter had they none. Then, harrassed and worn out, his wife ex-

pired; and the widower, with two little boys, at length reached London. But, alas! he soon found, that without friends, money, or influence, the metropolis is the most terrible place in the world for a poor literary man.

At length the tide turned. He had contributed some pieces to a certain periodical, which chanced to arrest the attention of a rich Scottish gentleman, who sought for, and patronized, the poet. The result was, that some publishers in London brought out the volume to which I have alluded, and the pathetic story of the poor poet instantly attracted notice.

He now became a "lion," and as such, though his pecuniary prospects were improved, the downward path to his grave really commenced. His portrait was published in the *Illustrated London News*, his songs were set to music, and he himself was petted by ladies who, like Mrs. Leo Hunter, were fond of patronizing novelties. Editors called him a "second Burns;" some compared him to Bloomfield; and all declared him a prodigy. There was scarcely a gay literary party in London to which he was not a welcome guest.

And just as Robert Burns was ruined by being idolized in Edinburgh—I mean morally—so Thom's entrance into gay London circles was his destruction. He now married again, took a house, and another sudden and unexpected turn of fortune in his favour, placed him in a position which, but for the intemperate habits he had acquired among his gay acquaintance, might have ensured him the comforts, if not the luxuries of life.

One of his books went to the East Indies, and a number of Scotch gentlemen there were so touched by the pathetic narrative of their countryman, that they subscribed the sum of six hundred pounds, and forwarded it to him. He had previously purchased a loom, with the intention of pursuing his vocation in London; but, alas! this sudden accession of money soon put an end to all industry.

It was about nine months after he had received this money that I became personally acquainted with him. So, having thus sketched his previous history, I will now communicate to the reader my own recollections of this talented, but unfortunate, son of the Muses.

CHAPTER VIII.

My introduction to Thom took place under the following circumstances:—

Whilst visiting William and Mary Howitt at their then residence, "The Elms," in Lower Clapton, at the eastern part of London, the conversation turned upon Scotch poets; and among them William Thom was mentioned, as the latest instance of genius triumphing over difficulties.

On my mentioning that I had never seen the poet himself, a person present very kindly offered to introduce me to him. That offer, however, I declined, for I by no means liked to stare at literary prodigies. The impertinence of some people in this way is prodigious, as the following circumstance, which just at this moment occurs to me, will show.

I was one day sitting with a very celebrated Temperance lecturer, in the city of Boston, when two ladies were announced as wishing to see Mr. G—. They were shown up stairs, and politely asked to be seated.

Of course, Mr. G— and myself suspended our conversation, in order to afford the ladies an opportunity of stating the object of their visit. But there they sat, mute and motionless, staring at G— most intently, much to the surprise of both of us gentlemen.

The ladies were, one of them middle-aged, the other, perhaps about twenty; both were extremely well-dressed, and far from ill-looking.

Five minutes passed away, and there still sat they—still and staring. I began to imagine that they constituted a deputation from some Deaf and Dumb Institution, and had a strong idea of the propriety of calling up a lady inmate of the house, who could communicate with them by signs.

Another five minutes of continuous staring at G—, and then the spell was broken.

The elder lady found her tongue, and said :

"Mr. G—, we had heard a great deal about you, and just wanted to see you."

Not a word more !

Then they arose, left the room and departed, both G— and myself being too much surprised even to accompany them to the street door.

Cool, was it not, gentle reader? Who the ladies were, we never learned; but, certain am I, that more inveterate curiosity-hunters it would be impossible to find.

To resume:—

Some weeks subsequent to this offer of introduction, I by accident fell in with a brother scribbler, who, in the course of conversation, said:—

"By the way, Thom wants to know you: he has read your 'Life of C—,' and wishes to make your acquaintance. I am going to his house next Saturday evening, and will take you, if you will accompany me."

Under such circumstances, of course, I was only too happy to pay a visit to the "Weaver Poet," as he was now styled, and I made the engagement to call upon him with my friend.

Accordingly, a few evenings afterwards, P— and myself proceeded to his dwelling, which was situated, we were told, not far from the celebrated White Conduit House, Islington. It was just at the "gloamin," as the Scotch call it, or the twilight, when we reached the door, as we thought, for P— had himself received but a vague direction from Thom in the street, and, like myself, was almost a stranger to that part of London.

We soon discovered that we had rapped at the wrong dwelling, and therefore were "quite at fault," as P— had forgotten the name of the street, although he remembered the number was 23, somewhere.

We strolled a little further on, and then seeing a gin palace at the corner of the street, I walked across the road, and entered it—both of us were well aware that Thom had become a frequent visitor at such places, and that in one of them we might probably discover his whereabouts.

Nor were we wrong in our conjecture. On entering the gin shop we saw one of those boys who are only to be found in London. He was employed in polishing pewter pots with a piece of leather, which vessels, as they were finished, were filled with porter by the landlord.

"Do you know," I asked, where a person named Thom resides in this neighbourhood?"

"Shud rayther think I did," said the potboy, looking knowingly—as indeed all of his tribe do—and he added:—

"A little lame cove, he as you vants—aint it?"

"That's the man," remarked P—.

"Scotchman?" interrogated the boy.

"Yes, a Scotch gentleman," said P—.

"Vell, I'm jist going to he's crib," continued the lad.

"He's a stunner—he is. Three bottles of vite tape, and ten pots o' haf-an-hafa ready to night, and more agoin'."

Now, by this, the young gentleman meant to imply that he had already taken three bottles of gin and ten quarts of half-and-half—(a mixture of beer and porter)—to Mr. Thom's house—a pretty certain indication, I thought, that a "moist" evening was to be spent.

"He've got a party o' swells over there—s'pose you be a goin' too—come on, then, my tulips—this vay."

So we followed the boy, who was laden with a large supply of potables, and presently we reached No. 23 C—e Place, B—y Road,—the place we had been steering for.

As soon as the lad had departed, we gave the knocker a shake, and the door was speedily opened by a drabbishly dressed woman, with a great bouncing baby in her arms. P— mentioned our names, which must have been heard from the inside, for a broad Scotch voice rolled out towards us, together with volumes of tobacco smoke:—

"Coom in—Coom in!"

"Ah! that's Thom's voice," said P—, and we entered.

The room into which we were invited was a small parlour facing the street. It was still dusk, and candles had not yet been lighted, so that it was next to impossible to see how many persons were present. Indeed, I had not time to investigate that question just then, for no sooner had I got into the room, than a short, stout man, limped up to me with a hearty welcome, and I felt my hand in another, which seemed to have a grip like that of a vice.

"I'm varra glad to see you. Mr. —, varra glad. I read your buke, and am delighted to make your acquaint. Set doon, man, set doon! Jeannie, bring some candles!"

The lights came; and then I had a better view of the little parlour, and its occupants—at least as good a glance as I could catch through the haze of tobacco smoke. The table was covered with bottles, —pewtér pots, in various stages of emptiness—glasses of all sizes—tobacco boxes and pipes. It was plainly to be seen that I was "in for a night of it," that is, for, as Thom said, "a literary fuddle." Could I have retired, I would have done so, for tobacco smoke is my abhorrence—but the liquor might wash that down—so I sat beside the Scotch poet, and had an opportunity of seeing "what manner of man he was."

Fancy, reader, a man much below the ordinary stature of humanity, with a chest which might have seemed symmetrical, had it been attached to a six-footer. Then, think of a head well shaped, and covered with hair of a colour between sandy and flaxen; which hair is tossed about in all directions, revealing a forehead broad and high, and ploughed all across, from temple to temple, with furrows, which trouble and time have united to deepen.

Then, imagine beneath large, bushy brows, a pair of grey eyes, now twinkling with fun, and the next moment charged with melancholy. These eyes have those certain indications of coming age, which ladies and gentlemen of a certain period of life seek to hide, termed "crows' feet." The upper lids are large and heavy—the lower seamed with parallel lines; and both are fringed with light eyelashes, these being scanty, as though many tears had washed some portions away.

The nose is long and large, tanned with exposure to sun and wind, and freckled thickly. Beneath it is the most characteristic feature of the whole face—the mouth, which is amazingly expressive. Somewhat long in the upper lip, and slightly convex, it approached in shape to that of Walter Scott's. About the angles there sometimes is betrayed a lurking humour, but more frequently these corners of the mouth have a "downward drag," which conveys the idea of pain, or of sadness—or both. Altogether, the face is open and manly, with thought written on every lineament.

With that large, broad chest, and these long muscular arms, it may well be supposed that had it not been for Thom's lameness, he would have been capable of great bodily strength. The unfortunate limp, however, sadly crippled him, for the right leg was considerably shorter than the left, and he walked with difficulty with the aid of a stick. Standing he looked short, but when seated, he might have been taken for a tall man, the body being so disproportionately long.

He was well dressed. The only ornament I perceived about his person was a small gold chain, to which was attached a watch of the same metal.

Among the other guests present, was the editor of a notorious Chartist newspaper; a lean and hungry-looking fellow who lay half drunk on the sofa; and a poor gentleman who had written a volume which ruined him. These two, I was afterwards informed, were regular hangers-on of Thom's—that is, so long as his money lasted; and it may easily be imagined, that, what with drinking parties, no work—for the loom was at length utterly abandoned—and evenings spent at taverns, the six hundred pounds quickly melted away. As soon as poverty once more came in at Thom's door, these "dear friends" of the poet's darkened his doors no longer. The other visitors were, I fancied, greater admirers of potatoes than poetry, so they sponged on the Weaver Poet, drank his liquors, praised his poetry,—and then were seen no more.

That night, a perfect revel was held. It had only Thom's conversational powers—and they were great

—to redeem it from being a mere animal and drunken debauch. At last *he* failed, too, and it was pitiable to see a man of his genius helpless and idiotic. Some one has said that "those who drink beer will think beer;" and most assuredly there was "small beer" enough in the talk as midnight drew on. Now and then Thom took up his flute and played a Scotch air to us; but he soon got beyond the power of even music to charm.

And this was the man who had suffered so much; who had written so touchingly of his poor dead wife and child—the writer who had drawn tears from many an eye! Oh, fatal patronage that had lifted him into spheres where his vanity had been flattered, and his vigour destroyed. It is useless now to tell what *should* have been done for him—let his subsequent fate be a warning to patrons, as well as to poets!

After this visit, I several times called at Thom's dwelling, where I seldom, however, found him; but in the parlour of a tavern hard by he was generally to be seen, drinking gin and water, and delighting those around him by his flashes of wit. Then, for some months I lost sight of him altogether, as I quitted London for a distant city.

After my return to the metropolis, being one morning in the vicinity of his dwelling, I thought I would give him a look in. So I proceeded to C—e Place, but the poet was no longer there. The house was closed and all the shutters up. I called at the gin-shop where I had formerly inquired about his residence, to see if I could hear where he now dwelt.

Some such a conversation as the following ensued between myself and the landlord, who, as on the former occasion, was busy in drawing liquor:—

"I want to know if you can tell me where Mr. Thom has gone to."

The publican stared at me with his great eyes; measured me from head to foot, and said, savagely—
"To the Devil, for what I care."

"He used to deal with you," I said civilly, "and so I fancied you might tell."

"I wish I *did* know where he was, for I've got a pretty stiff score ag'in him. He bolted one night, that's all I know, Mister," said the burly beer-seller—the very person who had made many and many a pound by the missing man.

Seeing I could procure no information from the publican, I went away, and all other inquiries I afterwards made in that neighbourhood were fruitless.

But some weeks afterwards, just about noon, as I was hurrying along a solitary street, in another part of the great city, all at once I came upon Thom.

What a change appeared in him since last we met! The glossy coat of black broadcloth had vanished, and in its place appeared a dingy grey garment, patched and weather-stained. No longer over the handsome plaid waistcoat meandered the golden chain—no more ticked the watch in his empty pocket! On his head was a very battered hat, and his face had frightfully fallen in. He laboured under a frequent, distressing cough, and his limbs quivered.

Red and raw were his lips; and his eyes had that bleared appearance which long indulgence in ardent spirits invariably produces.

"Why, Thom," I asked, in surprise, "can this be you?"

"Eh! mon," he answered, shaking his head, "it's just what's left o' me, and that is'nt much; look here!"

He bared his arm a little; it was shrunk so that the sinews stood out in strong relief—and it had been so stout and strong once!

I did not like to talk to him about his altered circumstances, but he touched on the subject of his own accord.

Pulling a book from his pocket, he held it before me. It was one of his own volumes of poems. He said bitterly:—

"Isn't it hard that I should be obliged to peddle my own book to get a dinner for Jeannie and the bairns? but I am obliged to do it, for we have not a bannock in the hoose."

He then told me he was waiting for a baker, who usually came by daily at that hour—the man was a

fellow-countryman, and he cherished the almost forlorn hope that he might barter his verses for bread for his family.

Happily, I was then enabled to prevent such a bargain; and begging him to take my arm, I walked home with him.

No sooner was his step and the thump of his stick heard on the threshold of the obscure cottage in which he now lived, than Jeannie came forward, but seeing me, she coloured up, and would have shrunk back. Poor thing! she had evidently hurried towards her husband to know if he had been successful in his errand.

"Come along, Jeannie," he said feebly; "it's all right." And then he dragged me in after him, for I was loath to intrude on his privacy at such a time.

First speaking to his wife, who went out to procure food, he called from the foot of the staircase—

"Wullie!"

And a fine, bright-faced lad hurried down. It was his eldest son.

"Here, Wullie," he said, giving the boy sixpence, "go quickly and get a half-quartern of rum and half-a-pound of oatmeal."

As soon as the lad came back, he mixed the spirit with the oatmeal, and drank it greedily.

"It's all I live on now," he said, as his poor dull eye began to flash up from the effects of the stimulant. "Eh, mon!" he added, "I must have had an iron constitution to have gone through what I have."

When the wife came back I noticed that poor Thom's troubles were to be increased by an addition to his already too numerous family. This, as he afterwards told me, weighed heavily on his mind. But, alas! the prospect of increased expenses could not now control his fatal appetite. Lung disease had so far advanced, that all desire for solid food was gone, and, as we have seen, oatmeal and rum were his daily victuals and drink.

It was now, when "heart and flesh" were failing, that he began bitterly to repent the extravagance and folly which had led to his utter destitution. It was too late for him to aid them by his pen, for all power of composition had departed. He still hoped that a return to Scotland might invigorate him; and a few tried and true friends set to work, and raised a subscription to enable him to revisit the scenes of his youth. For my own part I scarcely thought he could get through the journey—but, as will be presently seen, in this he succeeded.

One bright afternoon I went to see him. He was sitting in the sunshine at his door-step. Drums and trumpets were sounding from a little distance off, for an annual fair was being held. He begged that I would give him the help of my arm, as he wished to take his children to the gingerbread stalls. I, of course, complied with his request. At a booth he bought some "sweeties," as he called them, for the "bairnies." Then he tottered home again, with my assistance. I left him soon afterwards, and we never met again.

Enabled to do so by the friendly aid I have alluded to, he proceeded with his family—now of four children, to Scotland. There he rallied a little, but the change for the better was but of short duration.

On reaching Dundee, his liquor-drinking propensities painfully increased, and whiskey was what he could not refuse. Soon after he had settled at home, a banquet was given in his honour by some of his admiring countrymen. Oh! solemn mockery of a dying man!

On that occasion he primed himself for a great effort, and made a speech in which he said that on that home visit, he felt "like a bird fluttering round its forsaken nest." Fluttering indeed! for that dinner, "given for his honour," finished the tragedy of his life. Soon afterwards, at the age of forty-two, he died in poverty and want, in Croft Lane, Dundee.

Despite his habits, his wife clung to him to the last, and though worn down with grief and anxiety, insisted, careless of remonstrances, on following him to the grave. It was a wet day. Poor Jean went home to a sick bed—was attacked by typhus fever of a very malignant character; and six weeks after her husband's burial, she was laid beside him. What became of the orphans I know not.

So ended the career of one who, but for intemperance, might have now been living, an ornament to literature, and the darling of his kindred. And how many bright spirits like this have been extinguished by the Bottle! Looking back on the list of my own old school and college companions, there are scores whom I *know* to have perished from brandy. "Where are they?" Echo answers, "Where?"

* * * * *

Perhaps some reader of the above sad history may say—"It was merely the sudden elevation of a poor man of poetic power, which dazzled and bewildered him to his ruin—a man continually moving in good society could never have so fallen. A greater mind would have avoided the peril into which Thom sank."

Indeed, good friend, you are mistaken. There are instances, and many too, of some of the most polished individuals of the age having been cast down from their high estate by the Devil Intemperance. Some years ago, I knew one, who was born among the *elite* of society, and who all through his days moved in the "first circles." His works are the most polished productions of the age—and his lyrics are, perhaps, the finest in the language. *His* death was hastened by intemperance—for so far did he go in his latter days, that I have known him at a public dinner, to be so drunk before the cloth was removed, that he had to be taken away by his friends. I myself have seen him at ten o'clock in the morning, tossing for pots of porter in a printing-office, whilst in a state of maudlin intoxication. There is no condition exempt from the influences of the wine cup, and generally the more elevated the position, the more terrible the fall! Such scenes of moral degradation are indeed sufficient

"To make men tremble who never weep!"

CHAPTER X.

The "Comic Almanac," of which I spoke in a former chapter, was at length completed. Heaven knows that the affair was but miserably ludicrous, for how was it possible to write "as funny as one could," as Holmes says, when surrounded on all sides by poverty and destitution? And besides that, malt liquor, of which I now partook in large quantities, was not at all calculated to inspire one.

However, done the work was, and paid for; the money all spent, and utter destitution again stared me in the face.

I have stated that one of the inmates of the common lodging-house was an artist, and earned a poor subsistence by selling water-colour drawings. One rainy morning, while confined within doors, we, both of us, were lamenting our want of funds, and consequently the lack of that which funds alone could procure—a dinner—when a bright idea suggested itself to H—.

"I tell you what," said he, "*you* have a knack of writing rhymes rapidly about anything, and I can paint showy caricatures. Now, you know, this is the middle of January, and Valentine's Day will soon be here. Now do you see?"

"You mean," I remarked, "that we should get up Valentines between us, and sell them to the publishers?"

"Not a bit of it—very little money could be made in that way."

"What then do you propose?"

"Just this—we will get up original Valentines for any one who chooses to apply for them."

"But then," said I, "that mode of doing business would require a place where applicants could call, and how could we rent a room, who haven't enough to buy bread and cheese for our next meal? Besides, paper must be procured, and—in short, your plan does not seem to me feasible."

The conversation then dropped;—but the subject of it still retained some hold on my imagination. Certainly, I considered, if some means of starting in

such a vocation were procured, something might be made, for Valentine sending, among the middle and lower classes of London, is as much in vogue as ever. Taking advantage of a pause in a storm, I strolled into the bye-streets of the neighbourhood, and forgetful of whither I was wandering, found myself, at last, in the midst of a labyrinth of lanes, crowded with people who were attending a sort of universal market.

A strange place it was. Old clothes appeared to be the staple article of traffic, but every article under the sun, of a second-hand character, was huddled together in paneless windows. There, cast-away tools—broken glass—old books—bottles—fragments of household furniture—fried fish; more matters, indeed, than I can remember, were exposed for sale. The customers were of as motly a character as the wares—Jews being predominant. It seemed as though every article that could not find a sale in any other neighbourhood, was brought hither and made a source of profit.

There is a certain class of tradesmen in London called "marine store dealers," and such, by an act of Parliament, are compelled to have their names, in letters of one inch and a half long, on some conspicuous place over their doors. A pretty heavy penalty is the result of non-attention to this law, which was made to prevent mere receivers of stolen goods from openly pursuing their traffic, for these storeshops purchase anything that may be brought to them, and ask no questions. In order to defeat the laws as far as possible, the lower order of this class of dealers have their names and the words "Licensed dealers in marine stores," painted in long, very thin characters, so that although they may be of the required length, being of a hair-line breadth they are scarcely discernible. So much for this explanation, which is necessary to explain what follows.

As I sauntered along, I noticed that almost every third marine store dealer had omitted to comply with the regulations of the law. Now whether this omission was the result of ignorance or intention to defraud I did not know, and it was none of my business; but it struck me that if I could get the job of lettering for these offenders against the majesty of the law, I might do a good office for them and for myself at the same time, so I boldly determined to offer my services as a sign-painter.

No sooner was the determination formed than I proceeded to carry it into execution. No one, thought I to myself, knows me here, and what harm can there be in earning an honest shilling by the use of the brush—many a one have I got by my pen, and where is the mighty difference? I confess, though, I should not have cared for any of my former acquaintance seeing me commencing my artistic career, in so very humble a branch of Art.

I knew very well that it would not do to ask for such employment, as though I really needed it; indeed, one should never *supplicate* for work in any branch of labour. Men who really want, seldom obtain; while your dont-care-about-it chaps are almost invariably successful.

So I walked boldly into one of these nameless shops. A tall, gaunt, pale-looking young man, with a fuzzy hair cap on his head, a short black pipe in his mouth, and ragged clothes all over rust; and with a thievish-aspected dog beside him, was weighing out a parcel of kitchen-stuff, which a frowsy-headed girl had just offered for sale.

"Do you know," said I, with a bold look, "do you know that the Police hereabouts have sharp eyes?"

"What do I care for the — Police?" he growled—"there's nout (he was from Staffordshire) here they can lay hands on," and he looked round the shop.

"Nothing but *you*," I said, "and you'll have them on you before the week's over, if you don't look out."

He stared. Stepping outside of the shop, I pointed to the blank space over the door. The fellow comprehended me in a moment.

"Are you a writer?" he asked.

"I've done a considerable business in that line," I replied, and so I had; but not in sign-writing. Had I told him I had been a writer of books, out of the shop I might have gone—so, with a pardonable

mystification (I hope), I left him to suppose that I was a sign-painter in somewhat extensive practice.

"A man came along a week or more ago to do it, but he ha'n't been high since. What'll you charge?"

I knew no more about the prices for such matters than the man in the moon, so I gave him the indefinite information that I would not charge him too much, and in a sort of side-way inquired what the other man was going to do the job for.

"Twopence a letter, but couldn't you do it for less?"

"Not a farthing," I told him; "but as yours is the first I've done in the neighbourhood, and as you may recommend me, I'll knock something off when we settle."

"Well," said he, "can you do it at once?" He was evidently afraid of police inspection—perhaps, a constable who passed at that moment might have made him decide.

Of course I could do it right off—but, I thought, how can I procure a pencil, a brush, a little white paint, and a pair of steps? I had no money, but necessity came to my aid.

To shorten the matter, the man agreed to borrow a short ladder, whilst I procured the other materials.

I had in my pocket a good silk handkerchief, which I left with an old Jewess, who in consideration lent me one sixpence (it was worth eight), and it was to be her permanent property if I did not redeem it in the afternoon. At a neighbouring oil-shop I purchased for threepence a camel-hair pencil and some white paint on a bit of glass, that served as a pallet—a halfpenny lath served for a malletstick, and thus provided, I hastened back to the marine store dealer, who had not, however, procured the steps.

I was obliged to go with a message from him to a friend of his, who lived two streets off, for the loan of a ladder, and with some difficulty I lugged it along.—At length all was ready, and having the man's name on a bit of paper in my hand, I mounted the steps and began my career in a new line of life.

To my great joy the name was a long one, and to my still further delight, the man imagined it was necessary the place from whence he came in Staffordshire should be specified over his door. I honestly told him that was not necessary; but he wished to make "assurance doubly sure," and said he thought he'd better have "from Wolverhampton" put on, and of course, it being all the better for me, I went with a clear conscience at my job.

The man himself assisted me to strike the lines with a chalked cord; and then, having chalked out the space, so as to economize my room, I involuntarily looked round to see if any one who knew me was present, for I fancied in my elevated position, that all London might be staring at me. But there was only a little boy in pinafore, munching a cold potatoe, who appeared to take the slightest interest whatever in this, my first essay in "high art."

Now and then the storekeeper would come out, creeping under the ladder that nearly blocked up the door, and stand a few yards off to contemplate the progress of my work. When his name was finished (I suppose he had never seen it in print before), he looked pleased, and glanced up and down the narrow street, as though he wished some one else to share in his admiration. No one, however, stopping to participate in his pleasure, he went in again.

In about an hour the last flourish had been given and there, in full view of all the world, appeared over the door of the shop in Petticoat Lane, the following:—*Samuel Ely Pennington, Licensed Dealer in Marine Stores!* And there those white letters on that black ground may remain to this day, for aught I know.

And now only remained the approval of my dingy patron and his pay. I confess I felt much more nervous as to this fellow's criticism than I have ever felt about the success of any book of mine written before or since. The "agony" however, was not "long." He merely suggested an extra flourish or two, and then told me to come in and be paid.

There were forty-seven letters, one note of admiration, and more flourishes than I could remember; so I told him I would charge him for the letters, and give him the other matters into the

bargain. This made eight shillings all but twopence, so I deducted sixpence for a pot of beer, and received three half-crowns as my fee.

Pretty well that for a beginning! I considered; but, emboldened by my success, I called on two others that day. Both went round to see Pennington's sign, and I did theirs. That day I earned about sixteen shillings, with which I went home rich. The publicity of the occupation, however, disgusted me, and I determined never to resort to it again, unless actually compelled to do so.

Flushed with success, I invited my fellow-lodger, the artist, to supper. There was a house in the neighbourhood where, once a week, at eight o'clock in the evening, a tripe supper was prepared; and there, for the sum of eightpence sterling, one might have the article I have named served up in any style. H— was delighted at my success, and the more so as, he informed me, whilst we were "washing our supper down," that he heard of something that would enable us to carry our Valentine speculation into operation.

It seemed that he had been consulting the man of whom he had purchased his tobacco as to the scheme. Now this person had a little shop divided lengthwise into two by a partition. The portion not occupied by him he offered to let us have the use of gratis; as he believed the Valentine seekers might lounge in his tobacco shop whilst their love-letters were preparing; and besides this, H— had promised that I should write him some rhymes for his tobacco papers. It was ultimately agreed on by us, that a pane should be taken from the window and replaced with a board, with an aperture through which despairing lovers might drop their orders one night, and call for them the next evening—the Valentine-makers keeping out of sight, and the tobacconist transacting the pecuniary part of our concern.

I must say I felt some repugnance to this sort of business; but then I remembered that Lawrence Sterne, the illustrious author of "*Tristram Shandy*," had, whilst poor, done almost the very same thing. He hired a window with a letter-box, somewhere near the Royal Exchange, and advertised that "a gentleman" was ready to furnish, at short notice and for little money, songs, sermons, lectures, rebuses, anagrams, polygrams, acrostics, *Valentines*, epitaphs, essays, tales, &c., &c. There could be no great harm, I decided, in following such a master of his art; besides, did not the greatest men write for pay? The matter was decided.

Three days after our scheme was proposed we were ready for action. A flaming specimen Valentine, "done" by H—, in glaring colours, hung outside our office. It was quite a catching affair. There were, I remember, a pair of hearts transfixed by an alarmingly large arrow, which seemed to have shot from the bow of a naked, flaxen-headed, impudent little boy, who was attended by a pair of turtle doves, bill to bill. Then there were true lovers' knots in the four corners—a church in the distance, and a gentleman and lady making the best of their way thereto. Blue were the skies above—green and flowery the earth below. Everything in that Valentine promised undying love and perpetual bliss. I have no doubt that many who gazed on that remarkable production of art believed implicitly that it was a true allegorical representation of courtship just merging into matrimony—at least they looked as if they did.

Beneath the picture was an inscription, which informed the public in general, and amorous young people in particular, that for a small sum, Valentines, either in verse or prose, pathetic or satirical, either from a lady to a gentleman, or from a gentleman to a lady; either with or without pictures, would be written at half an hour's notice (if necessary), by a distinguished poet and artist. And then followed some specimen lines, which, as it might savour of vanity to insert here, I omit.

Scarcely had we opened our establishment than business commenced. Every morning our letter-box was full, and I can tell you, reader, that the insight into human motives and character which the perusal of those communications afforded me, was far from inconsiderable. Either true love—mock affection—anger—jealousy—envy—hatred—malice, and all uncharitableness, were the pervading tones

of each and every application for an "original Valentine," and it was surprising how many persons, whose letters, autography, and the very mode of folding their epistles, showed that they were "above the common," applied to the mysterious Valentine writer for assistance. Sometimes the directions were so minutely given as to easily enable me to tell who wrote them, and for whom the communication was intended. One letter had a five pound note enclosed; many contained verses to be altered, and all were filled with directions to be as "loving" as "satirical," or as "funny," as possible. Some contained real names—but in personalities I never would deal, and I do not believe that a single fourteenth of February document left our "office" that could hurt the feelings of any one.

As H—— and myself spent our easily acquired money quite as fast as we received it, at the end of our partnership (which, of course, ceased by the effluxion of time, on the thirteenth of February at midnight) we found that the tobacconist had made the most by the affair. Within a week after our business closed, neither the artist nor myself had a penny in the world—and now what was to be done?

As I was going through Bishopgate Street, thinking over matters, one afternoon, I saw in a bookseller's a cheap edition of a work of mine, which a few years before had been published in America. I instantly wrote to the publisher of the re-print, and asked him for literary employment. He replied, and I at once commenced a work, for which he paid me by instalments, and I took lodgings in a better sort of place than that in which I had lately seen and suffered so much. This I shall, in a future chapter, describe;—because I feel assured that such a model establishment as it proved to be, ought to be known, and I feel assured that the history of a few weeks' residence in one of them will be of use, and I will not venture to say how much.

It so happened, that soon after I left the Valentine Emporium, and before I had become acquainted with the publisher just referred to, I got out of cash. In my extremity I thought I would apply for a trifling loan to the tobacconist, who boasted he had made thirty pounds by our adjacency to his shop. There was a publican, too, three doors off, who had cleared a good deal by our customers, who used to repair to his parlour to drink, whilst their Valentines were preparing. Should one of these fail, I thought the other certainly would not.

But I did not know my men so well as I do now. I went first to the man of snuff, and told him what I wanted.

"Ah," said he, "you should have taken care of your money whilst you had it—it's no use;" and he went surlily into his little back hole of a parlour.

The same result attended my visit to the publican. He heard my request—politely informed me that I might visit a place which is not mentionable to ears polite, and resumed reading his newspaper.

I was savage, but what right had I to complain? What both said was true enough. I had squandered my earnings recklessly, and who should bear the penalty but myself?

CHAPTER X.

THERE is, in London, a society which has for its object the improvement of the dwellings of those whose means are limited; and also that of providing decent accommodation for single lodgers. Now, from what I have said respecting the common lodging-house, it must be evident that almost any change from such a home, if home it might be called, must be for the better. Indeed, more demoralizing places than these dens of destitution, cannot be conceived.

As I intimated in a previous chapter, I had seen quite enough of the place in Drury Lane to decide me never more to enter within its wretched precincts. But a home *must* be found somewhere. Looking over the columns of the *Times*, one morning whilst at breakfast, I noticed the advertisement of the society to which I have alluded. That is the place for me,

at least at present, said I, after I had read the terms of residing there; and I at once made up mind to apply for admission.

Some little preparation, however, had to be made before I could present myself at the "METROPOLITAN CHAMBERS," as the society's establishment was rather ambitiously called. In London the idea of living "in chambers" always carries with it the notion of respectability. There are "chambers" in Gray's Inn—in The Temple—in Clifford's Inn—in The New Inn—in Lincoln's Inn, and other Inns of Court, and these are mostly tenanted by barristers—bachelors "of gentility," and literary men of the first grade. The idea of dwelling "in chambers" myself, rather pleased my vanity.

For Bulwer has chambers in The Temple; and so has Barry Cornwall; and Samuel Warren, the author of "Ten Thousand a year;" and E. W. Cox, editor of the *Critic*; and so had Oliver Goldsmith, and Charles Lamb, and many others. There was a time, when I, too, thought of taking chambers in one of these great learned lodging places, and but for intemperance I *should* have done so. Now, "down in the world," I was fain to avail myself of "chambers" of a humbler description, in an unclassic locality; and which had no remembrances of the learned and renowned, to almost sanctify them.

For the few days, therefore, and whilst I could complete my few arrangements, which, I may as well confess, were to make up a decent wardrobe, and to nurse myself so as to get all traces of a recent drinking bout obliterated, I lived just as chance directed, generally getting a bed at a coffee-house, and listlessly strolling all day about the streets. Sometimes, I would witness an occurrence that I "worked up" for the newspapers, which would maintain me for a few days; but the insatiable desire for drink always drew the cash from my pockets. On one occasion, I felt, too, a craving for food, such as I never before nor since experienced; and this was the cause:—

I had, for a provincial paper, reported a meeting in London, and sent it down into the country "on spec;" that is, to be paid for it, if it was used, otherwise to get nothing for my trouble. It was inserted, and a post-office order for a sovereign sent to me. I was then occupying for a week a single room in a private lodging-house in Clerkenwell Close, and had paid my rent in advance. All my meals I took at eating-houses in the neighbourhoods where I might be strolling. When I received the order I had but two shillings left after I had taken my breakfast, and having the said "order" in my pocket, I determined to have "a spree," with a friend who lodged in the house. He was "nothing loth," and the morning and part of the afternoon was spent in the tavern. Nothing gave me uneasiness then, for I felt sure of having the "order" cashed on presenting it at the office before four o'clock. I even invited my friend to dine with me at a certain well-known house; and we flung care to the winds.

About half an hour before the office closed, I repaired thither with my document. The postmaster examined it, and as usual asked my name. I told him.

"There is some mistake here," he said, "This money is made payable to James——not to John——"

I said there must be an error in the post-office, if any; but it was of no use, and I was directed to write to the party who sent the money, have the error rectified, and then call again.

"But," said I, almost imploringly,—"*to-day is Friday—I cannot get a reply before Monday; and I am quite out of money;—I assure you it is all right.*"

"*Can't pay it—call on Monday*"—and down slid the little wooden partition of the post-office window.

I went to my lodging sadly depressed; but for that day I did not care much about food. Next morning—Saturday morning—I began to feel "peckish," but food I had none. I endeavoured to raise money on the "order," but it was of no use; and all that day I was foodless.

Night came; I slept and forgot my sorrows—I dreamed of food—absolutely banquetting; and I have always found that when I have been entirely destitute of money, I have had visions of heaps of gold.

But when Sunday morning came, how intensely did I crave for something to eat! I lay in bed, for I knew it was useless to go out in search of sustenance. As I lay, I heard the family below at breakfast, and the chinking of the cups and saucers sounded horribly. It was a mechanic's family who lived under, and well I knew that I should have been welcome to share his crust. But half starved as I was, I felt too proud to ask for bread. So rolled on the morning, and dinner time came, and the savoury smell of baked meat and potatoes stole into my room. I felt faint; but thinking the fresh air would revive me, I tottered down stairs. On my way I met the fat old landlady.

"Madam," said I, "would you be good enough to lend me sixpence?" for I felt sure I should have the money to repay in the morning, and wished to get enough of bread to last me till then. I told her, too, that I should receive money soon.

Never shall I forget her scornful look at me: the look of a regular hard-hearted London lodging-house keeper at a poor lodger! She point blank refused. Perhaps, if I had said I *wanted bread*, she might have offered me some; but no? I could have died then and there before submitting to such a degradation.

I would fain hope that there are few such women as these. God help the poor? Ay, alas! there are many such terrible exceptions to their sex.

I took a turn or two in the secluded, Sunday-stilled street—and went up stairs again. Tongue cannot describe the horrors I endured. I had now been fifty-five hours without food, and the gnawing in my stomach grew unbearable. To ease it, I rolled on my bed, but no cessation of pain came; and at last I dropped asleep.

When I awoke, night was just closing in. All pain was gone, and I only felt weak. Again I slept, and dreamed of jovial fare, and woke early, more ravenous than ever. But ten o'clock would soon come, and then for the post-office. Slowly, oh! how slowly, the moments dragged along! At nine o'clock I staggered out, and wandered through street and lane until ten tolled out. With what anxiety did I present the order once more! and how intently did I watch the clerk as he turned to the books! As his finger ran down each ruled column I thought he would never get to the bottom.

"All right," said he at last. How my heart beat! He placed the sovereign on the ledge, but I could scarcely pick it up, for agitation. Clutching it, however, I hastened to the nearest coffee-house, and, fool that I was! who ought to have known better, I ordered coffee and hot roll—about two of the worst things I could have taken after a fast of seventy-two hours!

The consequences of taking this meal were just what might have been expected. I suffered excruciating torture. No sooner did I move than my overloaded stomach rejected the insulting food, and I felt easier. I then took cautiously a little wine and water by spoonfuls, and some soaked biscuit; and by degrees I recovered, but it was long before I ceased to feel the effects of that terrible abstinence.

To return:—

Wonderful is it how poverty sharpens a man's perceptions; how necessity spurs him on to efforts of which he would have never dreamed in his hours of ease! And how striking are the extremes of our condition. There is scarcely a literary man, who cannot from his own experience furnish examples of the mutability of authorship. The following incident is by no means unparalleled in the lives of "authors by profession."

Every one who reads these pages will remember the attack made on Marshal Haynau, the Austrian General, by the burly brewers of Messrs. Barclay and Perkins. It became at once the topic of conversation in London, and the utmost admiration of the draymen's conduct was expressed in almost every paper that was issued from the press. Especially were the lower classes of the population delighted; and the women were almost frantic with joy.

"There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune,"
says Shakspeare. Now, it flashed on my mind that a comic song descriptive of the thrashing affair might

"take" if issued in the "nick of time." No sooner determined than done. I sat down in the box of a coffee-house, and on the fly-leaf of an old book, scribbled a parody on a well-known song which was written many years ago, and has always been popular with "the million." This song (the original I mean) commenced thus:—

"Near Southwark Bridge, on the Surrey side,
Lived a widow who much did lack, man;
Her lily-white hand she had long denied
To one John Brown, a black man.
For she'd fallen in love with another swain
Who was both a good and a gay man,
And she did all that ever she could to obtain
A Barclay and Perkins's drayman!"

In my parody, of course each stanza ended with "Barclay and Perkins's draymen;" and very pointed allusions were made to the woman-flogger—and Austrian despotism—and the British lion's horror of tyranny! and all that. The thing had not the slightest literary merit to recommend it;—if such had been the case it would never have taken with the class for which it was intended. The lovers of Tom Moore might have turned up their noses at it, but in Smithfield, or Spitalfields, it would have been pronounced, as indeed it afterwards was, "stunning."

Moliere, with a fine discrimination, used to read his comedies, when completed, to his housekeeper, a vulgar, illiterate old woman, and if they pleased her and made her laugh, he felt sure the public would receive them with favour. In humble imitation of his example, I read my production to a group of grimy mechanics when they came in to dinner. Their applause was vociferous, and each of them was clamorous for a copy.

That settled the business. I put on my hat, and proceeded to the classic regions of St. Giles in search of a publisher who would buy the manuscript of the precious production!

St. Giles is the region of song—of cheap songs I mean—of ballads and catchpenny dying speeches, that are howled about London streets. There live the men who almost exclusively patronise the cheap literature—the Macænas of the Mob-Poets! There the immortal Catnach flourished, grew rich, and died; and there still his successors reside. I had never entered one of these singular publishing establishments, and little dreamed, when but a few months before I had sold copyrights in the Strand, and in Burlington-street, that I should ever seek the favours of a cheap song-seller!

But so it was, and many a forlorn author—many to whom I am not fit to hold a candle—have been compelled by dire necessity to visit such regions. For my own part, I am not *now* sorry that my "star" led me thither. It gave me the view of a novel phase of life. Goldsmith was not ashamed to refer to his previous difficulties, when he says in the commencement of one of his delightful papers, "When I lived among the beggars in St. Mary Axe;" and why should I shrink from recording my experiences in St. Giles's?

New to this sort of work, I stood looking at the ballads in the shop window, before I entered the place. It was situated in a dingy lane leading from Monmouth-street, Seven Dials, into another street whose name I forget. Very different was it from the establishments of Bentley, or Colburn, or Putnam, or Mussey, I assure you, gentle reader; but as I fancy my pen could convey no perfect idea of its dirt, dreariness, and blackguardism, I refrain from more minutely describing the exterior of the street song-publisher's shop.

At length I entered. The shop was large and gloomy. There were no elegantly bound books to allure one; no tempting prospectuses of illustrated works to "come out shortly;" nothing of the kind. Wherever the eye turned, it beheld nothing but quires of songs of all descriptions, which ballad-singers of both sexes were selecting from and purchasing.

I picked out, from among the busy men behind the broad counter, one whom I supposed to be the master. I chanced to be right. I called him aside. He lifted a flap of the desk, and came round to me.

"Do you by songs?" I asked.

"Yes, if they are good 'uns; but I've hundreds by me just now. Wot's it about?"

"About Marshal Haynau and the Draymen," I replied.

"Let's look at it," he said, and put on his spectacles.

After he had read it through, which he did very rapidly, and in quite a business like way, he turned round and called out "Bill!"

In obedience to his summons there came towards him a man from among the crowd of ballad-buyers. He was a short, thick-set fellow, with a battered hat, ferret eyes, an unshaven chin, and clothes of all colours and cloths. He had a savage look, and scowled fiercely and suspiciously at me, as he limped along. This man, as I afterwards heard, was one of the most "selling" ballad-singers in all London.

"Wot d'ye think o' this, Bill?" asked the sooty-looking publisher.

Bill read it, and whispered something to his patron; then in a voice hoarse with perpetual bawling and perpetual gin-drinking he said:

"*Might* go, if it had more *patter*, and a k'volus—it *might*."

"You see," observed the publisher to me, "it ain't, as Bill says, enough of *patter*, and a *chorus* is everything. Now put some *patter* in, and p'rhaps I'll buy it, as the subject is new."

"Lend me a pen," said I.

I then, on his counter, added some "*patter*," or *slang*; tacked to it a chorus, and again submitted it to his approbation.

"Well, I don't mind a *bull* for it," he at length said.

"A 'bull,' what is that?" I asked.

"Why, half-a-crown," he answered, evidently surprised at my ignorance.

"No," said I, "I won't take that—I'd burn it first;" and taking it up I quitted the shop, resolved to try somewhere else.

But I had not gone far when a hand was laid on my shoulder, a rough voice sounded in my ear, and turning sharply round, who should I behold but the ballad-singer, Bill?

I rather shrank from his familiarity, but little he seemed to care for that.

"I say, old feller," he observed mysteriously, "Gov'nor could'nt *do* you, eh?"

"What do you mean?" I inquired.

"We'll, I'm precious glad you vos fly;—if you're agoin' to sell that song of you'n, wot'll ye let me have it for?"

"Will *you* buy it?" inquired I, doubtfully.

"In course I vill, and spec with it my own blessed self. Sal and I'll sing, werse and werse. Come, I'll give half a couter."

"How much is that?" said I.

"Vy, half a sur'ren—ten shillin'," he replied, "Tis more nor it's vorth, but I *might* make it go."

I took the money, treated him to a glass of rum, and after some difficulty got rid of him.

The next evening, as I was walking through White-chapel, I came upon a crowd who were surrounding a man and woman. The latter, I found, were singing my "Drayman" effusion, to the manifest delight of their listeners. The allusions to the Marshal were hailed with applause, and a rhyme against tyranny likewise met with considerable favour.

I mixed with the crowd, and stretching forth my hand, exchanged a half-penny for a printed copy of the production. I hardly knew it again, for it was surmounted by a miserable, battered wood-cut of the Duke of Wellington, the nose of which had been a little altered, and which professed to be a portrait of "Marshal Haynau, the Woman-Flogger." The compositor had made lots of mistakes in every line of the song, and punctuation was entirely omitted. But it "took," and sold with a rush. Bill must have made a good bit of money out of that same song, for I heard it chanted afterwards in all parts of London. As the "owner of the copyright" told me afterwards—"even dooks, and young swells of lords, and ladies themselves would send out their servants for a dozen at a time, and never ask for change."

Now, during the last twenty-five years, I have written not a little, and I am vain enough to confess that with some things of mine I have been a little pleased; yet I declare that I never was *proud* but of one production, and that was this song! Nor

have I ever felt so much pleasure as when mingling with a mob, hearing that doggerel ditty sung, and listening to the praises of the ragged crowd.

* * * * *

The necessary arrangements having been made, I now took up my residence "in chambers." Where they were situated, and what they were like, the reader shall soon learn.

CHAPTER XII.

BEFORE I more particularly allude to this residence of mine "in chambers," I may perhaps, as an indication of the morbid condition of my mind at this period, be permitted to present the reader with a copy of some verses, written at midnight, during a fit of deep despondency. No one has a more thorough contempt than myself for "occasional verses" made to order; and I trust that the reader will not suspect that these were written to gratify a stupid vanity. They were penned one dreary night, in a bare room, almost within the shadows of the towers of Westminster Abbey, the great bell of which was booming twelve o'clock over the wilderness of London, whose dull mysterious roar sounded even then.

To-morrow.

SWEET day—from whose perpetual dawn

Half of life's little light we borrow;

Veil of the future, yet undrawn!

Hope's own beautiful TO-MORROW!

Day ever rising—never risen!

Time ever coming—never come:

Thou, who dost paint the soul's dim prison

With landscapes of Elysium,

Still peeps thy morning-star behind,

Though sorrowful TO-DAY is glooming;

And o'er the vexed, tempestuous mind,

The thunder-peals of thought are booming!

When th' heart to its black depths is stirred,

Still, in each pause of raging sorrow,

A voice—a soft, blest voice is heard!

'Tis thine—the sky-lark of hope's heaven—

TO-MORROW.

What hoards of happiness *to be*,

Lie somewhere in thy secret keeping?

Aye keeps, as keeps a sunny sea

The rich wrecks in its bosom sleeping!

Yet, blest in but *expected* pleasures;

Earth's millions wait, and watch thy dawn:

As well the owners of those treasures

Might wait to see the deep gulf yawn,

And give them back their gold! Oh! when

That burial-vault of wealth shall ope,

Then shall the soul—and not till then,

Unfold the landscape of thy dream, oh hope!

Like some bright host with untried powers,

Bright, marching in the morning sun,

Started TO-DAY, with all its hours,

Prepared a bright career to run;

Like that lost army, madly strewing

The battle-field ere day is done;

From all that field's dumb death and ruin,

But one voice heard, and *that* a dying one;

Such this TO-DAY's last hours—now taking flight,

With all their hopes, and aims, and prospects bright,

And purposes sublime, to everlasting night

Then, wherefore hail a day new-born,

As though, upon its soundless wing,

Some dove unto life's ark forlorn

The olive branch of peace might bring?

No Eden bird this bosom's emblem!

The stormy Petrel's *mine* might form,

That builds no nest, but fluttering—trembling,

Lives out at sea, and fights the storm!

Screaming its sad song o'er the abyss,

Heard but by men distressed; as this is,

Lost on the world's dull ear, may reach lone misery's.

* * * * *

Behold me, then, reader, with all my worldly goods in a small valise, swinging from my hand, on the way to my new abode.

It is about four o'clock in the afternoon, and Cheapside, through which I am traversing in an eastward direction, is thronged. The Banks of Lombard-street—the Insurance offices on and about Cornhill—the dim Counting-houses in narrow gloomy streets, which lead to the wharves of the Thames—and the Custom-house, have all disgorged their clerks, and the released human tide is flowing through this *aorta* or main artery of the city, presently to branch off to the different portions of the great body and extremities of the metropolis. Happy, well-to-do people, some of them seem to be. I notice, here and there, some faces that I know; not long ago, I was on friendly visiting terms with them, but I avoid their recognition now. Perhaps *did* they observe me, the averted eye would indicate that they no longer desired my acquaintance. And why? The reader already knows.

I pass the Bank of England, and think, as I rattle a few shillings in my pocket, of the wealth that lies within a few feet of me. I used to keep an account at a Bank myself, and drew my cheques, and had them honoured too, as promptly as many who now roll by. Yes, and I drove my "four wheel chaise" and went down to the "Derby," and betted with the best of them.

And now I go through narrow Threadneedle-street, emerging from it close by the London Tavern. The windows of that well-known civic establishment are all a-blaze with light, and cheers come now and then from the company who are assembled above. Five years ago, and I formed one of such a company;—I, too, sat at the anniversary dinner of a charitable society to which I was a subscriber. Then I paid a guinea for my dinner, and more for wine, and eat my turbot, and tossed off my champagne, and rinsed my fingers in rose water, and hob-nobbed with rich men. But *now*—I am sneaking along, and the very waiters who lounge near the door regard me contemptuously.

And so on, until I arrive at Shoreditch. Then I turn down a long, tortuous thoroughfare, and am in Spitalfields—that region of unwomanly women—fashioned-looking weavers, and of children old before they have entered their teens. Pawnshops and gin-palaces are plenty hereabout; and at the corner of courts and lanes, thieves and prostitutes lie in wait for their prey.

An old church looms up in the now dim, smoky atmosphere. It is Sir Christopher Wren's masterpiece—at least its portico is.

Leaving this on my right hand, I cross Brick-lane, swarming with children and costermongers, and reckless people of all descriptions; and, lo! another lofty building looms black and shadowy; and volumes of smoke, belched from unseen chimneys, send down stifling fumes, and black snow, into the already blackened roadway.

Is this a church also? Far from it! Let us step just within this great gateway and look around.

A dull rumbling sound fills the air. From innumerable windows, with boards like blinds instead of panes of glass, perpetually issues a steam—it is vapour from vats. The grinding of malt causes the rumble, and the liquor in these steaming vats is beer in course of manufacture. Heaped on each other all round us are barrels of various sizes, and on the ground they lie in many a row. Big, burly men, with red caps and stout aprons, pass you every moment; and heavy drays, drawn by enormous horses, driven by gigantic fellows, go continually in and out through the entrance-gates. Day and night, that rumbling is heard; morning, noon, and at all hours, that steam is to be seen.—No, it is not a church. It is one of the great brewery establishments—and "Truman, Hanbury, and Buxton," is written over the doors, and branded on the casks, and painted on the drays.

What enormous wealth do the proprietors of that brewery realise from it—and from what is that wealth derived? I will tell you.

Mark these small mean abodes all around the brewery! Look up and down this long thoroughfare. Peep into the public-houses that meet you at every few yards. Remember that these places are swarming with miserably poor people, and that these are

but a portion—a very small portion of the wretched beer-drinkers of London. It is from such ruined poor folks that the great brewers obtain their riches.

Buxton! can that be the Buxton who pleaded so hard for the slave—Fowell Buxton, the philanthropist—the friend of Wilberforce—can *he* be a partner in the manufactory of such a pernicious agent? Can the man, who so pleads for black slaves, derive his gold from that which makes white men worse slaves than ever worked in the cotton fields of Carolina?

Even so—the great Anti-Slavery worker *was* a partner, and on his death his son succeeded him. "Buxton and Anti-Slavery," and "Buxton and Beer," must be cries to chime together!

Just beyond the brewery, and on the other side of this narrow Brick-lane, we turn into another street, walk along for a few hundred yards, and a massive edifice stands before us. Lights, cheerful lights, are gleaming from its numerous windows. It has a substantial look; and were it daylight, we might perceive on its granite pediment the words "Metropolitan Chambers" engraven.

A flight of a few stone steps led to a lofty door, furnished with a large, single plate-glass pane. It looked brilliant within, like the vestibule of a West-End Club-House, though of course not rich in decoration. Opening the doors, which swung on heavy brass hinges, I entered, valise in hand, and perceived that on my left hand was a brilliantly lighted room, with the word "Office" inscribed on its window. At my right was the commencement of a splendid flight of broad stone stairs.

Everything looked so bright and new, and so thoroughly out of the common order of things, that I almost fancied that I had got into some private establishment by mistake. But there was the "Office Bell" inviting me to ring, and ring it I did.

Almost immediately a window-sash slid up, and a very gentlemanly-looking man made his appearance.

"I wish to obtain lodgings here," I said.

He looked pleasantly at me, and handed me a printed list of terms. They were three shillings per week—to be paid in advance.

I said that would suit me.

"Can you give a reference?" he asked.

I told him that I was not aware that such was necessary in a public establishment of that kind, especially as the rent was paid in advance. However, I mentioned the name of a friend to whom I knew I might apply. I understood afterwards, however, that my reference was not made use of.

"And now," said he, after I had received a printed receipt for the rent—"here are the rules of the house."

With my receipt, a key—numbered, was handed to me. This belonged to my bed-room door. I was told that if I chose to have a safe cupboard I might, by depositing one shilling—which safe was furnished with a cup and saucer—a knife and fork—a basin and spoons,—two plates and a dish. By depositing an extra shilling, another key was handed to me, which was that of a "locker" in the bed-room for holding clothes, &c. These two deposited shillings were to be returned whenever I gave up the keys, or quitted the place for good.

In fact, all the arrangements were admirable, as the reader will presently perceive.

An attendant showed me to my room, where I deposited my valise. This room was on the first floor—(there were six, and all of them in every respect alike). The entire place was of great length, and so high as to secure the most perfect ventilation. A broad avenue ran down the apartment, and on the right and left were the entrances to the bed-rooms, every one of which was separate from its neighbour. The partitions that divided them were about eight feet high, and all were open at the top. A very neat iron bedstead ran along one side with bedding exquisitely clean and neat. The locker stood opposite the entrance, and a small stool was placed at the bed foot. On the wall were hooks to hang apparel upon. Nothing could well be more convenient. Once in your room, you were perfectly private; and the gas-lights were so arranged above, that neither lamps nor candles were needed.

At the entrance to each dormitory were conveniences for washing, &c.; in short, nothing could be required which was not furnished.

Having disengaged myself of my luggage, and become one of the household, I went down stairs to look about me.

Passing from the entrance hall through a pair of large folding doors, I entered a spacious apartment, more like the banqueting room of a nobleman's castle in the olden time, than any thing else to which I can compare it. It was large and lofty. High over head was a ceiling with Gothic open work, supported by brackets of the same material. A large window, at the southern end, lighted the place, and there were immense panes of ground glass let into the roof, at intervals. On the centre of the floor, which was covered with fine matting, was a large centre-table, on which lay heaps of the best magazines, and all the daily and weekly newspapers. Along the sides were compartments, each furnished with a broad mahogany table and comfortable seats, and easy chairs were scattered here and there. This was the Coffee Room.

On one side of it was a long room, called the "Reading Room," with moveable mahogany tables, comfortable chairs, and two immense fires blazing in ornamental open grates, giving quite a cheery and home-like aspect to the place. On the walls hung splendid maps, and on brackets stood busts of great men of all times, and various casts from the antique. At one extremity of the room was an excellent library, to which some of the lodgers acted, in rotation, as librarian. Here were some of the best and most useful works of the day, and many there were, it appeared, who availed themselves of this delightful portion of the building. On passing a screen at the opposite end of the room, I found a Drawing-class in full operation, and I afterwards discovered that in this place, on different evenings, were held Elocution—French—Latin—Grammar—Bible—and other classes. Occasionally, too, a lecture was given by a popular lecturer at the Society's expense; and on these occasions the friends of the lodgers were admitted. At one time their lady acquaintances were permitted to be present, but after a time a committee vetoed this arrangement, which caused, and I thought justly, great dissatisfaction.

On the other side of the coffee room was a kitchen, furnished with all the appliances of the culinary art. At one end of this was a Restaurant, where, at certain hours, dressed dinners at very moderate rates could be procured. But for those persons who choose to cook their own chop, or steak, or joint, or indeed anything else, every necessary utensil was provided and kept in perfect order for them by servants of the establishment.

Then there was a smoking room; and these I believe composed the whole of the apartments on this floor, excepting the rooms of the superintendent of the institution, with which, of course, no lodger had anything to do.

I next descended a spiral flight of stairs, and found myself in a large cool chamber, fitted up with small safe cupboards arranged in rows. Their fronts and backs were constructed of perforated zinc, so that there was always a cool rush of air through them. Each had a different lock. My key was numbered 97, and on opening the safe corresponding to that number, I found, neatly arranged, the articles I have before spoken of. This completed the establishment accommodation, so far as the occupants were concerned, and I think that the reader will acknowledge that for such, no one would object to pay three shillings per week.

I took my place (any place) in the reading-room, and sat near the fire. There were several very intelligent persons engaged in conversation, into which I gradually slipped, and soon formed a few acquaintances. But feeling weary, I early retired to my room. As I intimated, the dormitories were lighted by gas. I found the bed as good as could be desired—nothing wanting; and a card nailed inside the door informed me, if more blankets were necessary, where to apply for them. The rules were also placed in a conspicuous position.

From these I learned, that no conversation was allowed between the occupants of different bedrooms—that no smoking would be allowed in the

dormitories—that no swearing and indecent language would be permitted anywhere within the walls; and a hope was expressed that all would unite in promoting the general comfort. At twelve o'clock all lights were to be extinguished; and after that hour, unless in special cases, no one would be admitted or suffered to go out. In cases of sickness, a medical man would be provided, at any hour, by the society, gratis; and a porter would be up all night to summon him if necessary.

It was about ten o'clock when I retired to rest. Presently I heard one and another going to their rooms. By-and-bye all was silent, and precisely at twelve out went the gas. I slept soundly, and after a copious morning ablution, went down to the coffee room.

On the first day I purchased my food ready dressed—but afterwards I did my own cooking, which I found a pleasant change, and though I am not quite a Soyer, or a Coreme, I can now do a chop or make soup with any one.

Anxious to see the whole of the regions below, I spoke to the superintendent, and asked for the requisite permission. He himself politely offered to accompany me, and down we went.

The entire basement was devoted to sanitary purposes. There were washing tubs on the most improved constructions, with hot and cold water pipes leading to each, and stands for the women to prevent their taking cold. Here was a wringing machine (worked by a steam engine), on the centrifugal principle, into which went sheets from the wash tub streaming water, and which, after three minutes' rapid circular motion in a vessel with perforated sides, came out almost dry; thus saving the wear of women's wrists, and the tear of the textile fabric. Here was a drying machine; and here, ironing machines—all seemed perfect. In another place were bath-rooms, with hot and cold, and in one place an Artesian well, worked by the little engine, which went so quietly that no one above had the most remote idea that such an article was down stairs.

Lodgers might either themselves wash, or get it done by the Society's women, or where they chose. There was, in fact, no compulsion in anything, excepting so far as regarded the observance of morality and decency.

One of the most express regulations of the "Metropolitan Chambers" was, that no intemperate person should be a sharer in the benefits of the institution—yet with a strange inconsistency, beer was sold at the Restaurant—I know not whether it is now banished or not—I hope it is.

From the foregoing account of this admirable institution it will be seen that nothing could be wanting to promote the comfort of the tenants, and with a few exceptions there was no grumbling. A very good feeling existed between all parties, and whilst I remained, there were no expulsions; but I heard that soon after I left, a lodger was prosecuted at the Society's expense, for purloining from a fellow-lodger.

And yet—with all these aids to comfort—the evil spirit of drink could not be exorcised from that beautiful coffee room—that reading room—and that kitchen. It did not appear in its worst shape, I admit, yet still it was there. But if the insanity of intemperance appeared only occasionally, and in a mitigated form, it furnished abundant evidence of the necessity of eradicating it altogether.

Having thus given a sketch of the "Chambers," I shall in the next chapter glance at a few of the lodgers.

CHAPTER XII.

The society in these "Metropolitan Chambers" was of a very different kind to that which I had found in the Model Lodging House in Drury Lane. The occupants here were chiefly mechanics of a superior order—first-class men in the finer departments of labour. There was a lithographic draughts-

man—a capital optical-instrument maker, then engaged in constructing some exquisite models for exhibition in the Crystal Palace—a translator of French *feuilletons* for a weekly journal—and others of a like station. But excellent and irreproachable as was the conduct of most of the in-dwellers, even there, in that admirably conducted institution, the consequences of intemperance were frequently to be observed.

I believe that this was in a great measure attributable to two causes;—one was the allowing beer to be drawn and sold *within the building*, and the other the vicinage of a public house. How the directors of the Society could allow the former evil, I cannot imagine—of course for the latter they could not be held responsible.

As soon as I had fairly settled down in my new quarters, I began to work steadily for the publisher to whom I alluded in a previous chapter; but I am positive that, had not the fatal beer-engine been so near, I should have accomplished ten times the work I really got through. Habit is a tremendous tyrant; and in the matter of malt liquor it fettered me fearfully. It was now a page, and then a pint;—now a concluded chapter, and then a commenced quart. So it went on, until at last beer overpowered brains, and indolence succeeded to industry.

One day, as I sat in the corner of one of the spacious boxes of the coffee-room, conversing with two or three of the lodgers over a pot of the “heavy beverage,” I amused myself, as was my habit, by sketching heads on a piece of waste paper. This attracted the notice of the lithographer.

“Let me just look at that,” he said, taking up the scrap on which I had drawn a memory-likeness of Lord Brougham.

He glanced at it—told me that I was “an artist,” at which I smiled doubtingly—and asked me whether I could draw on stone.

I told him that I had never tried.

“Well,” he remarked, “you could—there is no doubt about that, and can earn money at it, too. If you’ll try, I’ll bring home a stone this evening.”

I assented, and the next day I took the lithographic chalk in my hand for the first time. Mr. S— himself sat for his likeness, and, barring a few blurred lines, the result of inexperience, I succeeded pretty well; better in the likeness than in the drawing, though. However, S— took the stone to his shop, and brought back with him the first impression of my first sketch on stone. After that I used to make many a design or portrait, which materially aided me in a pecuniary point of view.

If I could have refrained altogether from intoxicating liquors, I feel quite sure that at this period I might have earned no despicable wages by my pencil alone; but, alas! the temptation was too strong; and “stones” sent me by publishers to draw upon frequently lay untouched until all patience on their parts was worn out. At length all emolument from this source was put an end to by so gross an act of carelessness that I feel almost ashamed to record it.

I had been out on a “spreed” the night before, and so it is no wonder that one morning on rising, with an idea that I had something to do which must be done, I felt quite unequal to any labour at all, either mental or physical. My head was dizzy, without aching. My eyes were dim, and every object looked hazy; and when I quitted my bed, it was but to sink groaning into a chair that stood beside it. To walk across the room was an absolute impossibility; and a chill colliquative sweat burst from every pore. At length, however, I managed by slow degrees to dress myself, and then, tremblingly, I descended the staircase to the place where the beer was sold. So “shaky” was I, that it was with the utmost difficulty I could lift the pewter measure to my fevered lips; but I managed to do it, and drank off its contents at a draught. Then I staggered to my usual corner, and endeavoured to fulfil my engagement, which was to design a frontispiece to a new forthcoming work.

But I possessed not the power. Idea upon idea flowed through my brain with amazing rapidity, yet not one of them remained for an instant. A hundred times I took up the chalk, but as often my trembling hand refused to do its office. For the life of me, I could not draw a line as I wished; and in a paroxysm

of rage I dashed the stone into a dozen fragments. Now, thought I, if I could get a little brandy to steady me, I have another stone, and may succeed. So I went out, sneaked into the public-house, and drank off a tumbler full of cogniac. The effect was instantaneous. I felt capable of anything, and in ten minutes from that time I was sketching away with great rapidity. I thought, as I proceeded, that I had never produced so splendid a design before, and to my eye it seemed an amazing emanation of genius! Cruikshank—Phiz—Gavarni! I defied them all! At length, the design being completed, I sent it off to the pressman, and requested that a proof might be sent me.

The proof did not arrive that day—but it did in two days afterwards, when I was quite sober; and never shall I forget the mortification I experienced when I gazed on the horrible record of the hours of my intoxication. It was the maddest mixture of absurdities and incongruities that the eye was ever offended by.—What I had deemed, whilst “beside myself,” to be a splendid and original effort, in my sober moments I saw to be as contemptible a production as ever disgraced its originator. Accompanying the “proof” was a note, in which the gentleman who ordered the design more than intimated his suspicions of my state when I sent it to him, and requested me to apply to him no more for employment.

There went another chance! I tore up the proof, flung it into the fire, and so ended, for a long time, my lithographic career.

One morning, as a party of the lodgers were sitting round the great kitchen fire, watching the progress of some soups that were gently simmering on the top of the hot plate, a tall singular-looking young man entered, and was warmly welcomed by one of the two present. He was a stranger to me, so it was not for some time after his arrival that I partook in the conversation which ensued.

“Ah! Seaton!” said one, “and so you are out again!”

“And how d’ye like picking oakum?” asked another.

“And grinding wind?” inquired a third—by which query he meant working on the treadmill.

Now, as the stranger was very fashionably dressed, I was somewhat surprised; for gentlemen who pick oakum, and work on the treadmill in a prison, are not usually attired stylishly.

“Pooh! pooh!” hastily said Mr. Seaton—“I didn’t care a rush for it. All that made me savage was cutting off my moustachios—but they’ll soon grow again.” And he ran the tip of his fore-finger across his upper lip, where fluffy indications of a new crop of light hairs were to be seen.

It appeared that Mr. Seaton had for some years resided in Paris, his father having discarded him on account of his dissolute habits. Spite of these habits he was a remarkably smart fellow;—well educated and of good address, he might have passed muster in the best society; but the smallest quantity of drink maddened him, and then he was a dangerous customer.—He had undergone his late imprisonment of a month for assaulting the police, and had only been liberated that morning.

Seaton and myself became gradually acquainted, and just at that time it so happened that a new paper in the French language was started in London. Now Seaton was a capital translator, but knew nothing whatever of London life. He had been applied to by the editress of the journal in question (a French Countess) to furnish racy “bits” of metropolitan subjects. So it was arranged between us that I should get up the original matter, and that he should “do them” into French, each of us taking half the proceeds. This we did for some time; but at last Mr. Seaton got into the station-house so often that the newspaper folks got tired of bailing him out; and as I could not write in French, my connection with the journal of course ceased.

There were some other very superior young men in the “Metropolitan Chambers,” who were alone prevented from standing high in their respective callings by their love of liquor, and what is called “good-fellowship.” In various parts of these chapters I have alluded to the special dangers to which intellectual young men are exposed; and here, before I conclude this chapter and the book, I would

without apology, quote some striking instances of wasted talent," from an article already published in a New York Journal.

The article I allude to is one of a series entitled "Leaves from the Journal of a New York Clergyman, during the Half of the Present Century;" and the particular chapter I select from is called "Dangers of College Life." Who the writer is I now not; but no one who reads his contributions to the *New York Times* will doubt for one moment the accuracy of his statements.

The Clergyman says:—

In May, 181—, I met with a painful occurrence. I was going down Broadway near the Battery, and observed a man before me leaning against a lamp-post, whose clothes showed that he had been taken out of the gutter. Our eyes met as I approached him, and I saw it was my former classmate in College, S— T—. Though greatly intoxicated, he recognised me, and turned away his face as I passed him. I could not leave him as he was, and turned back to see what I could do for him. When I called him by name, he burst into tears, and in a low tone of voice begged me not to degrade myself by speaking to him in the street. I insisted, however, on taking him home with me, notwithstanding his squalid appearance; when, after a few hours' sleep, he told me his melancholy story. His intemperance had led his relatives to cast him off; and he was then on his way to Philadelphia to seek employment from a gentleman with whom, in his better days, he had formed an acquaintance at Saratoga. His chance, he remarked, was very slender; but it was all that remained to him, and he was determined to try it. He did try it, but without success. I never heard of him afterwards, and fear he died by his own hand.

He told me what I well knew, that his bad habits were contracted while at College. He was only one of many of my fellow-students who had fallen victims to the temptations of a College life. In those days, there were no Temperance Societies; and temperance itself was little understood, and still less regarded. Hot suppers, midnight carousals, were too frequent with us, and sowed the seeds of death that in a few years carried off a fearful proportion of our number to an untimely grave. What a wreck of life and high talent do I see when I look back!

Brilliant and generous-hearted J— B—! He seemed to know everything as if by intuition. An hour at study was quite as sufficient for him as a year for others! and yet averse as he was to protracted continued labour, no perplexed classmate ever sought his aid in vain. He would sit down beside the slowest and dullest of them all, and would somehow contrive to work the lesson or recreation to their minds before he would quit them; and in the exuberance of his spirits, he would laugh at his own impatience when the work was done. It might be the Classics, or Mathematics, or Ethics; everything seemed to come to him without effort. He had a voice, too, of great compass and ringing tone, that made him one of the first among speakers; and he was accompanied with that natural ease and usefulness of manner that wore upon you irresistibly. With such talents, and with family connections including some of the most distinguished and influential men in the State, he seemed to have before him a brilliant career of life. His ambition was in that direction. How often has he said to me that he would never be satisfied until he had become a member in the councils of the nation; and much did I hope his high aim would tend to save him from the habit that had begun to grow upon him. But

He had scarcely gained admission to the bar, when he sank down into a sot, and died a dishonoured death in the morning of his life. I saw him when he was very low in his misery. He knew all, and confessed all. "I have seen the last of my happy days," he said; "the cloud that is over me will never be scattered. My heart is worse than broken. It has been made a burnt offering to the Demon of Indulgence." I well remember the scalding tear and quivering voice with which he made the confession.

H— was another of my classmates. He seemed to live in a constant gale of gladness. His face was sparkling, but always good-natured. He

had a wonderful talent for mimicry. He could imitate everything, animate or inanimate. He was not a good scholar; but even when his deficiencies were most glaring, he had some humorous remark respecting his studies or himself, which not only disarmed the professor of all angry feeling, but seemed also to render him equally a favourite with teachers and students. He, too, yielded to the temptation; became so degraded and lost, that he was at times taken to the watch-house in the dead of night, and in a few years was hidden in his grave. I have been told, that during the latter part of his life, all that milk of human kindness that so distinguished his earlier years seemed to be changed into the very gall of misanthropy. He boasted in despair, that he would not only "curse God and die," but that with his last breath he would "curse both God and man."

And there was my affectionate friend J— N—. A nobler or a warmer heart can seldom, if ever, be given to man. Such was our mutual attachment, that he had well nigh changed the whole course and business of my life. His father was at the time an eminent merchant in one of our eastern cities. He was to enter the counting-house, when he left college, and most earnest were his entreaties that I would accompany him. To render the temptation the stronger, his father made every proposition that propriety would allow, as he was anxious that J— should be gratified. I had almost yielded. Brilliant prospects in the world, and ardent personal attachment, at times, had very great influence upon my mind;—but reflection restored me to my former purposes. Little as I then understood of what the ministry of the Gospel is, or of what it requires, I had, for years, kept my vision fixed on it as my profession; and in the end I told my dear J— that I could not abandon it. He was grieved, though not displeased; and we parted, he to "his merchandise," and I to my studies, with vows of an attachment that no diversity of pursuit should be allowed to extinguish or abate.

For years we embraced every opportunity of meeting. Our correspondence was constant and more than cordial. I have sometimes thought it breathed the spirit of David and Jonathan; and so it continued until he became a junior partner in his father's "house." His letters about that time became less frequent, and he pleaded in apology, the pressure of business. But they also lost their former freedom. There was constraint, with an effort to conceal it. I could not but be alarmed. I knew "the sin that easily beset" him, and had often implored him to be on his guard. I wrote to him frankly what I feared. He immediately, and in a manner much like his former self, thanked me for my candour, but assured me he was safe against the temptation respecting which I was anxious. About the same time he was married to a lovely woman, and his letters on that subject were so like those of former days, that I hoped for the best. He was most happy in his choice, and as he was now forming new relations in life, and with new sources of enjoyment opening to him, I pressed on him the importance of increased vigilance, and a total withdrawal from occasions of temptation.

But although for a short time he seemed to feel what he owed to his family, to himself, and to his Maker, the habit came back upon him. Before the end of four years from his marriage, his conduct to his wife became so violent that she had to return with her two little children to her father's house; after which he soon became a raving madman, and died in the Asylum for the Insane,—his widow soon after dying the victim of a broken heart, leaving their babes orphans.

These are sad, sad pictures. And yet they are selections taken at random from a countless group. Could I unfold the roll which would tell of all the evil that intemperance in our colleges has produced, we should find it "written within and without;" and the "writing thereon, lamentation, and mourning, and woe." I have put these two or three examples on record, in order to show how little this Demon can be controlled by considerations of a high ambition, or of domestic ties. "O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly mine honour be not thou united." Would to God that I could engrave upon the heart of every one, old and

young, the graphic warning of Solomon, "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast."

It appeared to me that, although in the main such institutions as these "Metropolitan Chambers" are admirable, yet they have one great fault; and a fault, too, that cannot easily be remedied. I allude to the want of female society. It was, as I before said, the custom, at one time, for the female relatives and friends of the lodgers, at these "Chambers," to be admitted to a lecture or soiree, one evening in the week, in the Reading-room. This was abolished for no good reason that I can see. If you want to make a man modest and virtuous, you cannot do better, I think, than bring him up among modest women—if you would brutalise him, let him live in a stable. The writer of the cases I have just been quoting says, with reference to the admixture of the sexes:—

I ought not to close this reference to the dangers that beset my earlier years, without mentioning very distinctly one great means of my preservation and safety. The society of ladies has done much for me all my life long; and it was the salutary, softening influence of such associations that, with God's blessing, restrained me from many an excess into which I might otherwise have been led while receiving my education. It is a bad sign when a

young man has no relish for such company. Whether ever a man's station in life, whether higher or lower, public or private, he will become a better man, and escape many a disaster, if he will listen in due season to the voice of the intelligent and refined among the other sex. Not only do they generally excel us in their nice perception of the proprieties of life, and in their tender sense of duty to God and man; but they are equally before us in their instinctive faculty of foreseeing evil before it is upon us, and of wisely discerning the character and motives of men. It was not all a dream which made the wife of Julius Caesar so anxious that he should not go to the Senate-Chamber on the fatal Ides of March; and had he complied with her entreaties, he might have escaped the dagger of Brutus.

* * * * *

I might have extended these "PASSAGES" to a greater length—but I have deemed it best here to take leave of the reader. Many of the foregoing papers have been penned with no little pain—but I care not, so that they be productive of benefit to some one or other of Misery's children. No vanity has urged me to their publication;—nothing but a stern sense of duty should have compelled me to make such disclosures. Take them, Reader, as random leaves torn from the volume of a hitherto Wasted Life's History—and draw from them warning and instruction—if you can.

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